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REID AND HIS FRENCH DISCIPLES

Aesthetics and Metaphysics

BY

JAMES W. MANNS



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This book is dedicated
to my mother, Helen,
and to the memory of my father, Harry Manns

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PREFACE

Before another word is written—that is, before the reader discovers that this is the section where acknowledgments are made and skips ahead to the introduction—I should like to express my deep gratitude to Professor Edward H. Madden for the support and guidance he has provided me throughout the writing of this book. It was he who initially inspired me to undertake the project, he who stood alongside all through its development, good-naturedly offering critical feedback that invariably proved to be incisive and insightful, and he who was there to coax me over (i. e., badger me out of) occasional periods of inactivity. I simply cannot thank him enough for all that he has done.

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Thanks also to the *Review of Metaphysics* and the *Journal of the History of Ideas* for granting me permission to draw on papers I had previously published with them, and to the Galerie de France for agreeing to let me employ a painting by Alfred Manessier in the cover design. And last but hardly least, I thank my wife Syham for her encouragement and support while this book was being written, and while it was not being written.

INTRODUCTION

Thomas Reid's philosophy has enjoyed various periods of ascendancy since its initial formulation in the mid-eighteenth century. Presently, in fact, it is receiving considerable attention, due largely to the profound reflections which it offers concerning philosophic method, and to its provocative critique of certain fundamental presumptions that have been lodged at or near the core of western philosophy practically since its inception. Reid's philosophical approach is now viewed by many as an effective antidote to the various speculative and systematic excesses to which any number of thinkers have proven acutely susceptible.

It is precisely against the backdrop of such excesses that Reid's philosophy is best appreciated. The unpretentiousness of its basic claims—that we *really do* directly perceive the objects about us, for example, and that they *really are* largely as they appear to us—makes it improbable that this is a philosophy which will capture the imagination of the youthful enthusiast who has been beguiled by talk of absolute being, pure intentionality, or the transcendence of the ego. And yet there is a genuine boldness embodied in these claims—it simply is unlikely to be detected by anyone who has not yet fully assimilated the western philosophical tradition. What is necessary is that we weigh anchor and set sail on the uncertain waters of skepticism for a spell, drift across the pulverizing calm of idealism, only to find ourselves tossed ashore amidst a veritable transcendental tempest. Then and only then will we be in a position to realize what promise this new land offers us. What is at issue is the complete upending of an entire philosophical tradition, in order that we might recommence our thinking on solid ground; and this is no light chore.

The present surge of interest in Reid's philosophy is not the first one America has witnessed. During the first half of the nineteenth century Scottish realism, as it was often called, became quite firmly established both in academic and religious circles (though certainly these circles were not then as distant from one another as they have now become). Francis Wayland, for example, president of Brown University from 1827-1855, espoused the teachings of the Scottish

school. His principal work, *The Elements of Moral Science*, came to be widely used as an instructional text and enjoyed numerous printings.¹ Several other university presidents of that era shared this same philosophical perspective, including James Walker of Harvard, Henry Tappan, the first president of the University of Michigan, and Asa Mahan, first president of Oberlin College. A bit later (in 1868) James McCosh left Queens College of Belfast to assume the presidency at Princeton (then the College of New Jersey), thus prolonging somewhat the academic life of Scottish realism in America.²

Most of the above individuals were not just academics, but were trained also—or initially—for the clergy. One commonsense thinker who adhered to his clerical vocation—and was probably far more influential for having done so—was Alexander Campbell. He, along with Barton Stone, founded the Disciples of Christ, America's largest indigenous Christian denomination. His religious teachings stress the freedom of the will, bringing Reidean arguments to bear against Calvinist determinism, or against mere physicalist determinism.³

The original planter of Scottish philosophy on American soil, however, was John Witherspoon. Born in Scotland, he was part of the wave of Scottish Presbyterians who emigrated to the new world early in the eighteenth century to escape religious persecution at the hands of the English. A clergyman himself, he saw in the realist

¹ Only recently it was again reprinted, this time with J.L. Blau as its editor: Francis Wayland, *The Elements of Moral Science* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963).

² For more on this topic see: H.W. Schneider, *A History of American Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963); Joseph Blau, *Men and Movements in American Philosophy* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1952). E. Flower and M. Murphey, *A History of Philosophy in America* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1977), vol. 1, Chapters 4-6; Edward H. Madden, "McCosh on Basic Intuitions and Causality," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 20 (Spring 1984): 119-146; J.D. Hoeveler, *James McCosh and the Scottish Intellectual Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); Edward H. Madden, "Francis Wayland and the Scottish Tradition," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 21 (Summer 1985): 301-326.

³ See, for instance, Edward H. Madden and Dennis W. Madden, "The Great Debate: Alexander Campbell vs. Robert Owen," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 18 (Summer 1982): 207-226.

doctrine an effective means of refuting the “alarming” claims of Berkeleyan idealism.

In 1768 he was appointed to the presidency of the College of New Jersey, and less than a decade later became one of the signers—the only clergyman in the group, in fact—of the Declaration of Independence. Holding certain truths to be self-evident was surely no problem for a philosopher of his stripe.

Among the writings which helped shape or at least reinforce the Scottish tradition in America could be found certain works which originated in France. In 1832 the English translation of a celebrated series of lectures offered four years earlier in Paris by the philosopher Victor Cousin was published in Boston under the title *Introduction to the History of Philosophy*.⁴ Cousin, as I shall show, was very much a disciple of the Scottish school. In 1834 a translation of the third volume of that series of lectures, a critique of Locke’s *Essay* was brought out in Hartford.⁵ By 1854 Cousin was so highly regarded in America that his major work, *Du vrai, du beau et du bien* (*The True, the Beautiful and the Good*) barely had a chance to appear in France before its English translation appeared in New York.⁶ Translations of certain principal works of another major French philosopher of the Scottish persuasion, Théodore Jouffroy, also surfaced in Boston not long after their impressions in France, these being his *Philosophical Miscellanies* and his *Introduction to Ethics*, published, respectively, in 1838 and 1848.⁷

With their voices thus being heard on the opposite shores of the Atlantic, it is not at all surprising to find that Cousin and Jouffroy were highly influential figures in the French philosophical milieu of that era, as well. Indeed, it is said that when Cousin offered his

⁴ Victor Cousin, *Introduction to the History of Philosophy*, trans. H.G. Linberg (Boston: Hilliard, Gray, Little and Wilkins, 1832).

⁵ Victor Cousin, *A Critical Examination of Locke’s Essay on Human Understanding*, translated with Introduction, notes and additions by C.S. Henry (Hartford: Cooke & Co., 1834).

⁶ Victor Cousin, *Lectures on the True, the Beautiful, and the Good*, trans. O.W. Wight (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1854).

⁷ Théodore Jouffroy, *Philosophical Miscellanies*, translated, with introduction and critical notes, by George Ripley, 2 vols. (Boston: Hilliard, Gray & Co., 1838); and *Introduction to Ethics, Including a Critical Survey of Moral Systems*, translated by William H. Channing (Boston: J. Monroe, 1848).

series of introductory lectures in 1828 a stir was created on the left bank the likes of which had not been witnessed since the days of Abelard. Jouffroy cut a far more sober, or less incandescent, figure than Cousin, but he too commanded great respect as a professor and developed a considerable following of his own in the relatively short time allotted to him before his untimely death. As a result, both in the lecture hall and through the written word these two thinkers were responsible for impressing their respective versions of Thomas Reid's philosophy upon a significant segment of the French intellectual community of the nineteenth century.

Credit for being the first to promulgate Scottish philosophy in France goes to Pierre Paul Royer-Collard. In truth, Royer-Collard was a philosopher only secondarily; his principal calling in life lay in the field of politics. From 1789, when his constituency from St. Louis-en-l'Île selected him as their representative to the municipal council, until the 1830s, when he retired from the Chamber of Deputies, he occupied a great variety of positions, among which can be counted his many years of service in the Chamber of Deputies (including a couple of years at the end of the reign of Charles X as its president), and an important stint as president of the Commission of Public Instruction during the sensitive years following Napoleon's ultimate exile. He was widely esteemed as a man of high principles, as stern in his devotion to Catholicism as to the idea of the constitutional monarchy. Indeed, the mere fact that he maintained a salient presence in French political life for nearly half a century—witnessing two revolutions, two restorations, an empire, and the rather volatile hundred days following Napoleon's return from Elba—seems to lend credence to this estimation of his character, for only by holding steadfastly to one's convictions is it possible to remain standing in political waters where shifting tides and treacherous undercurrents forever threaten to upend one. And if he was perceived as becoming increasingly conservative as the years went by, that was only because the general climate of opinion grew more liberal over the same period.⁸

⁸ Honoré Daumier perceived him as becoming increasingly, well, something else, as in one of his sketches from the Chamber of Deputies he presents Royer-Collard with his wig on backwards! Even Royer-Collard himself, after the death of Casimir Perier in 1831, was heard to remark "Je ne suis plus de ce monde." Appar-

Quite in the middle of his political career—in 1811, to be precise—Royer-Collard was appointed to the chair in the history of philosophy at the Sorbonne, and for the next three years he lectured in philosophy. It is a matter for conjecture as to just how he came to be acquainted with the Scottish doctrines which he so fervently communicated from his chair. The commonest hypothesis, presented in its most colorful fashion by Hippolyte Taine, has him coming across a copy of Reid's *Inquiry* in a bookshop along the Seine—"between the odd Cuvier and a Chef's Almanac"—a volume "whose pages had never been turned by anyone but the wind." Finding that it contained a refutation of the English forerunners of Condillac, Royer-Collard bought it "for thirty cents, thereby founding a new school of French philosophy."⁹

Although this anecdote is cited often enough that one comes after a while to half-way believe it, I have a somewhat different conjecture of my own to offer. During the first decade of the new century, Royer-Collard was a frequent visitor at the salon of Mme Helvétius in Auteuil. There he came to know such thinkers as Cabanis and Destutt de Tracy, successors of Condillac known as *Idéologues*.¹⁰ Their philosophy endeavored to represent the human being as truly a bundle of sensations, reducing even such powers as reason and will to mental events for which some naturalistic account could be supplied. (Cabanis, incidentally, was more radically reductionistic than de Tracy in this enterprise).

Another individual known to the salon during this period was Maine de Biran, who became a regular visitor to Auteuil after his election to the Chamber of Deputies in 1809 required him to take up residence in Paris. Biran must surely be counted as one of France's most interesting and undervalued philosophers. His first work, a

ently it showed. (Quote from the article on Royer-Collard in the *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIX Siècle*, (Paris: *Administration du Grand Dictionnaire Universel*, 1875), 1486.)

⁹ Hippolyte Taine, *Les Philosophes classiques du XIX siècle en France* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1923), 22. This translation, and all other translations in this work, unless otherwise indicated, are my own.

¹⁰ Actually, Destutt de Tracy himself preferred "*Idéologistes*," but Napoleon pejoratively termed them "*Idéologues*," and in this as in so many other things, Napoleon got his way. See Guy de la Prade, *L'Illustre société d' Auteuil* (Paris: Editions Fernand Lanore, 1989), 87.

memoir entitled *De l'influence de l'habitude sur la faculté de penser* won an academic prize in 1802. The presiding judges were Cabanis and Destutt de Tracy, so naturally it can be expected (and rightly so) that something of the Idéologues' point of view is reflected in it. But his own thinking led him increasingly to affirm active power to the soul, indeed ultimately to regard will as constituting the essential element of selfhood. By 1809 he was already well on his way to formulating his new perspective, and it was at this time that his relationship with Royer-Collard could have turned into a friendship from which a genuine philosophical exchange would follow.

As a philosopher, Biran was self taught but well read. He had familiarized himself with a number of the English philosophers of the eighteenth century, so it is not at all unreasonable to suspect that he had some acquaintance with Reid. His own introspective approach to philosophy, after all, is very much in the same spirit, as is likewise his affirmation of the activity of the soul.¹¹ It could very well be, therefore, that it was he who was responsible for at least pointing Royer-Collard toward Scottish philosophy. If this were the case, in fact, it would add yet more substance to the phrase uttered by Royer-Collard in his funeral oration for Biran: "He was master to us all."

But whatever were the means by which Royer-Collard came to be familiar with Reid's work, there is no denying that he earnestly took Scottish realism to heart, and for four years directed its critical thrust against the Idéologues. These latter, it should be pointed out, had become something of an orthodoxy in France at that time, so dislodging them was no small task. Nevertheless, Royer-Collard undertook it, and ultimately succeeded. In his eyes, it seems, nothing short of the very moral education of the youth of France was at stake, inasmuch as the Idéologues' doctrines appeared to reduce human beings to automata and deprive them of any moral initiative.

¹¹ The following characterization of Biran's approach by Philibert Damiron brings out this affinity between Reid and Biran rather well: "Notre philosophie trop souvent n'est que la physique appliquée à la connaissance de l'âme; elle conçoit l'âme à l'image de quelque substance matérielle. . . . Cela tient à une fausse méthode, au préjugé qui porte à croire que l'étude psychologique doit se faire par voie de raisonnement . . . [et] on incline à conclure du physique au moral, de l'externe à l'interne. Telle n'est pas la manière de M. du Biran. Il sent et il observe." In Philibert Damiron, *Essai sur l'histoire de la philosophie en France au dix-neuvième siècle* (Paris: Ponthieu et Compagnie, 1828), 296.

However sound Royer-Collard's reasoning may have been, his victory over the Idéologues would probably not have been as decisive as it was, had there not been included among his student followers a charismatic young man by the name of Victor Cousin.¹² When Royer-Collard stepped aside from his instructional duties in 1815, it was Cousin whom he chose as his suppléant.¹³ Cousin took the cause to heart, and delivered the message with even greater zeal than his master. Thus by 1820, when the vicissitudes of French politics took a turn against Cousin and silenced him for the next 8 years, he had already developed a coterie of followers who were sufficiently gifted and sufficiently young to assure the perpetuation of this new orthodoxy for several decades to come.

Chief among Cousin's devotees in those early years was Jouffroy. Though Cousin was only four years Jouffroy's senior he nevertheless was his teacher and therefore continued to be mentor to his younger colleague for some years to come. It was Jouffroy who provided French translations of Reid's complete works, as well as Dugald Stewart's. In his own philosophizing, as we shall see, even where Jouffroy ventures into regions only lightly touched upon by Reid, he almost invariably does so in a manner that would likely have met with Reid's approval. In short, then, Royer-Collard introduced Scottish philosophy into France, Cousin considerably broadened the extent of its appeal, and Jouffroy made available the letter of Reid's teaching, while keeping its spirit alive in his own works.

¹² It is true, the emperor did seem to appreciate Royer-Collard's efforts. He reportedly said to Talleyrand, just before Royer-Collard's debut, "Savez-vous, monsieur le Grand Electeur, qu'il s'élève dans mon université une nouvelle philosophie très sérieuse, . . . qui pourra bien nous débarrasser tout à fait des idéologues, en les tuant sur place par la raisonement?" Cited in Hippolyte Taine, *Les Origines de la France Contemporaine*, 2 vols. (Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 1986), II, 728n. Emperors, however, are notorious for departing as quickly and violently as they come. Let it not be thought, either, that Royer-Collard was courting Napoleon's favor. It is related that "on voulait lui faire prononcer dans son discours d'ouverture quelques paroles à l'adresse de l'empereur; mais sur ce point on ne peut rien obtenir de lui." *Dictionnaire Universel*, 1486.

¹³ Alan B. Spitzer, *The French Generation of 1820* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 85n.

The present study concentrates on a particular aspect of Scottish philosophy: the expression theory of art and beauty developed by Reid in his *Intellectual Powers*,¹⁴ a theory which holds that the beauty which we perceive upon, or attribute to, the sensuous surface of any beautiful object derives from and points toward a certain spiritual interior which the object's aspect is then said to *express*. In this study I provide a detailed examination both of Reid's version of expressionism,¹⁵ and of the numerous interpretations which the theory received as it made its way through nineteenth-century France.

I offer more, however, than just an analysis of a particular aesthetic doctrine, and for this reason have seen fit to subtitle this work, "Aesthetics and Metaphysics." The simple fact is that in the hands of its principal proponents—Reid, Cousin, Jouffroy, Lévêque, and Sully-Prudhomme—expressionism stands embedded in a larger philosophical context, and it is essential to its proper understanding that we elucidate these contexts. Certain interpreters—Mill, for example—treat Reid as endorsing a representational realist epistemology (the philosophical position that seemingly was most abhorrent to him); others view him as something akin to an ordinary language philosopher (a compliment in some circles, but an insult in others). Since taste, like so many other faculties, is seen by Reid as having first principles, since beauty is a quality which we *perceive* in objects, since a certain set of linguistic dispositions has grown up

¹⁴ Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, in *Philosophical Works*, with notes and supplementary dissertations by Sir William Hamilton, and an introduction by Harry Bracken, 2 vols. (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967).

¹⁵ I refer to this theory also by the phrase "expressionist aesthetics" and sometimes just as "expressionism," without aiming to suggest any intensional shadings between one term or the other. Certain artists—Beethoven and Van Gogh, for example—have been referred to as expressionists, and whole movements have borne the label "expressionism"—Abstract Expressionism, Lyrical Expressionism, German Expressionism. Advocates of the theory under consideration here, while they would agree that artists within these movements do achieve expression through their works, would nevertheless claim that the same is true of Impressionists, Abstract Formalists, Classicists—of any artist at all, in short, worthy of the name. It is a *general* theory of art and beauty, that is, which Reid and the others offer, and it ought not be confused with any of these more limited expressionisms I have just mentioned.

around our aesthetic responses, misunderstandings in any of these domains can have an immediate and profound effect on how his theory of art and beauty is interpreted.

Cousin likewise has suffered considerably at the hands of his interpreters. He is widely regarded as owing his greatest philosophical allegiance to the German absolute idealists, and not to Reid. This, I will argue, constitutes a serious distortion of his philosophy, and distortions of this magnitude can profoundly affect the way one views his aesthetics.¹⁶ Therefore, especially in regard to these two thinkers, I have felt the need to devote considerable attention to elucidating a number of their basic philosophical convictions and commitments: any study which begins in darkness is likely never to emerge from it. "Aesthetics and Metaphysics" thus indicates not an accidental but a necessary conjunction of elements, while at the same time it presents these elements in the order of their importance to my own study.

In Chapter 1, I provide a detailed examination of Reid's metaphilosophy, his theory of perception, his position regarding the distinction between primary and secondary qualities, his theory of causality, and his views on the relation between philosophy, philosophical discourse and ordinary language. All of these topics will then be reassembled within the framework of Reid's aesthetic theory.

Chapter 2 begins with a consideration of Cousin's overall philosophical outlook, and comes ultimately to focus on his own expressionist aesthetics. (I forego any examination of Royer-Collard's writings, as he had precious little to say on aesthetic

¹⁶ In a work entitled *Victor Cousin's Aesthetics and its Sources* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954), for example, Frederic Hill asserts that "it would be misleading . . . to stress the influence of Reid's aesthetics on Cousin" (57), and he pursues instead various Germanic paths. The only reason he gives in this regard, however, is that Reid's aesthetics "is contained only in the brief eighth chapter of [his] *Intellectual Powers of Man*" (57). For someone schooled in Germanic thought, apparently, brevity is regarded as a philosophical defect (and as becomes obvious in my Chapter 1, a genuine understanding of Reid's aesthetics requires a knowledge of many of his basic philosophical tenets, not just an acquaintance with this one essay). Further, it seems unlikely that Will even bothered to read this one essay, brief as it is, as he refers to its author as *John* Reid. It is just such interpretations as this that I desire to counteract.

matters.) From this analysis should emerge a sense of how great Cousin's dependence on Reid really was, especially in metaphilosophical and epistemological matters, but also in aesthetics, as well. Regarding his penchant for metaphysics, I will show that the doctrines he embraced can more reasonably be traced to Leibniz than to any of the absolute idealists. By placing the proper slant on Cousin's metaphysical views, it should become apparent that they do not contradict any of Reid's fundamental contentions, but are meant to be viewed as complementary to them: boldly filling in certain theoretical gaps which Reid, out of prudence, preferred to leave empty. This tendency, we will see, is very much in evidence in Cousin's aesthetics.

The third chapter is devoted to Jouffroy, whose *Cours d'esthétique* is the first thorough and detailed presentation of the expressionist position in France.¹⁷ Reid himself offered hardly more than a sketch, while Cousin could not be said to have fleshed it out in any extensive manner. It was Jouffroy who performed this latter service, focusing especially on the psychological mechanisms and processes involved in the apprehension and appreciation of beauty. As the method of introspective psychological analysis, of which the *Cours d'esthétique* constitutes his most sustained employment, came to him directly from Reid, I give some consideration at the outset to Jouffroy's reflections on philosophical and psychological method, with the further aim in mind of demonstrating how closely his own philosophical consciousness shadowed Reid's.

It is not until this third chapter, I should note, that I offer any evaluative criticisms of expressionism—criticisms which question how well the theory fits the facts. In the first two chapters my critical efforts are directed toward extracting a clear and complete understanding of the theories of Reid and Cousin from the relevant texts. Not until the expressionist doctrine reaches a certain degree of elaboration, however, does critical assessment seem appropriate, and it only reaches this degree in the hands of Jouffroy. Critical evaluation is vital to this study, as the growth and development of a theory is largely a product of the objections it encounters: the first law of philosophical inertia holds that a theory at rest will remain at rest until scrutinized critically, hence an understanding of the

¹⁷ Théodore Jouffroy, *Cours d'esthétique* (Paris: Librairie de L. Hachette, 1845).

versions of expressionism that succeed Jouffroy requires an acquaintance with the problems which Jouffroy's version confronted.

In the face of sound criticism, a vital theory reacts positively. Two phases in its development can easily be detected, and they will be pursued here in Chapters 4 and 5. The first phase occurs when proponents of the theory attempt to insulate it against the charges that have been brought—swaddling it, as it were, under numerous layers of ad hoc qualifications. This in turn can lead to either of two outcomes: either the insulation becomes so thick that the theory suffocates, or a full scale reworking of its central concepts is brought out, thus rendering the theory strong and sinewy—fit to take on a new generation of challengers. Many of the thinkers examined here should rightly be seen as participating in the first phase of development—introducing this or that qualification to deal with particular problem spots. Only one—Sully-Prudhomme—really provides a full scale renovation of the expressionist doctrine. But after all, if a job is done properly, it only has to be done once.

In pursuing the career of French expressionism through its subsequent phases I group the various thinkers who are under consideration into two groups: (1) the academic community, students of Cousin and Jouffroy who themselves went on to become instructors in the French educational system; and (2) the intellectual community, consisting of writers, poets, clergymen whose ideas on aesthetic matters stemmed from the same source, but who did not themselves hold academic appointments. This manner of grouping the relevant individuals, it must be emphasized, is merely an organizational expedient; it does not represent factions within the movement, and the interplay of ideas is not at all confined within these artificial boundaries. Thus Chapter 4 presents the contributions to expressionism made by the academic community, while Chapter 5 details the contributions of the intellectual community at large.

It just so happened that toward the end of the last century, the poet Sully-Prudhomme did offer a radically restructured version of expressionism, one which, while not abandoning any of the central concepts of the theory, revised them in a manner that enabled it to keep pace with a rapidly changing intellectual climate. As a result, a theory which at that time was beginning to show its age a bit was revitalized and brought to a point where it stood ready to confront the twentieth century with as much vigor as its earlier versions had

confronted the nineteenth century. I devote a section at the end of Chapter 5 to indicating certain of the respects in which Sully-Prudhomme anticipated a number of the expressionist theories of the twentieth century, something which, up until now, he has received little credit for doing.

Let us note, incidentally, before beginning the present analysis, that though I have made liberal use of the term “expressionism” in characterizing the aesthetic theory of Reid and his followers, none of them referred to their own theory by that name; in fact, the word “expression” only makes its way into the title of the last work considered here—Sully-Prudhomme’s *L’Expression dans les beaux-arts*. But “-isms” and “-ists” often arrive on the scene long after the action has quieted down: Did Leibniz think of himself as a rationalist? Did he think of himself and Descartes as *both* rationalists? Would Kant have called himself an aesthetic formalist? Hence it is not surprising to find the label “expressionism” coming into being considerably later than the theory itself. What *is* somewhat surprising is that expressionism, the aesthetic theory most commonly linked with romanticism—that artistic movement which glorified unrequited love, indulged itself in its sorrows and sorrowed over its indulgences—should have been bequeathed to France not by some hyper-emotional denizen of the salons, but by a clearheaded, no-nonsense Presbyterian minister from Aberdeen.

CHAPTER ONE

THOMAS REID

My examination of Reid in this chapter divides itself into two main parts. In the first I offer a characterization of certain themes which stand at or near the center of his overall philosophical enterprise; in the second I focus upon the principal elements of his aesthetics. Specifically, in Part 1, I consider Reid's critique of "the ideal system," which itself involves two components: (1.1) his metaphilosophy, especially as it is concerned with detecting and validating the basic principles of commonsense (a term which has a very special significance in Reid, as I will explain shortly), and (1.2) his own theory of our perceptual relationship with the external world. These are followed by a brief discussion (1.3) of Reid's understanding of causality. In Part 2, I focus (2.1) on Reid's contention that beauty has its own first principles; (2.2) on his insistence that beauty is properly attributed to the beautiful object and not the experiencing subject; and lastly (2.3) on the expression theory which attempts to trace beauty to its proper origins.

These two parts are not at all independent of one another, as if they constituted two separate compartments of Reid's thought, for an adequate understanding of his aesthetics requires a grasp of his fundamental philosophical commitments. Reid's contention that beauty has its own first principles needs to be highlighted against a backdrop of his treatment of first principles in general; his belief that beauty is genuinely a property of the beautiful object brings his theory of perception to the forefront (a topic which itself involves various first principles); his expression theory involves his views regarding causality, while providing an interesting test case for his linguistic theses (yet another aspect of his metaphilosophy). And to the extent that our understanding of Reid's aesthetics is enriched by seeing how it interweaves with his general philosophical outlook, our appreciation of the transformations wrought on his initial, seminal position by his French successors will thereby be similarly enhanced.

1. "*The Ideal System*"

What provoked Reid into making his positive contributions to the western philosophical tradition were the negative consequences to which the basic assumptions in the philosophies of Descartes and Locke led, the most negative of these being the skepticism of David Hume. The basic assumption in question was termed by Reid "the ideal system." Surely, if one is as rigorous and impeccable in his reasoning as Hume was and nevertheless reaches conclusions as abhorrent to the universal sense of mankind as were those which Hume reached, then the inference which readily presents itself is that the very starting point of Hume's reasoning had to be fatally flawed. This starting point must therefore be identified and eliminated, in order that it might be replaced by a more fruitful one. This characterizes, in the broadest sense possible, Reid's argumentative strategy.

Let us begin this examination of the ideal system by looking into the significance of the term "idea" itself, as it was passed on from Descartes to Hume. Descartes explains ideas in the following fashion: "Some of my thoughts are as it were the images of things and it is only in these cases that the term 'idea' is strictly appropriate," whereupon he enumerates, as samples of such ideas "a man, or a chimera, or the sky, or an angel, or God"—an enumeration which obviously contains anticipations of a variety of problems (as well as the Resolution of some of them).¹ Locke liberalizes the term somewhat in defining it as the word which stands for "whatsoever is the object of the understanding when a man thinks, . . . whatever is meant by *phantasm*, *notion*, *species*, or whatever it is which the mind can be employed about in thinking."² But surely this broader definition includes the "images of things" of which Descartes speaks; and in particular, primary and secondary qualities, although defined as powers to produce *sensations* in us, are subsequently explained

¹ René Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, translated by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), II, 25.

² John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed., with forward by Peter Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 47 (I, I, 8). All subsequent references to Locke will be to this edition, and will cite the book, chapter and section number in parentheses; thus: (I, I, 8).

and characterized in terms of the *ideas* they produce in us. Such qualities of course are crucial to the present issue, for it is they which (are purported to) inform us of something of the nature of external reality. Let us trace out the implications of this manner of construing ideas.

"Now as far as the ideas are concerned," Descartes continues, "provided they are considered solely in themselves and I do not refer them to anything else, they cannot strictly speaking be false;" but since they are not always so considered, "the chief and most common mistake which is to be found here consists in my judging that the ideas which are in me resemble, or conform to, things located outside me."³ Descartes here takes the first radical step toward erecting an impenetrable barrier between the self and the world; indeed in his case it is only the goodness (or the non-badness) of God which legitimizes any penetration of it. His contention seems to be that the mind has immediate and direct knowledge of ideas, but only indirect knowledge of any external entities.⁴ An inferential leap is therefore required to bridge the gulf between the mind and the world which (we presume) surrounds it, and such a leap is unavoidably perilous. Without the assurance that God is not a deceiver, in fact, no inference from idea to world, on Descartes' account, would be legitimate.

This impounding of ideas within the self is carried forth by Locke in his *Essay*. Locke, however, did not want to argue, any more than did Descartes, that the connection between self and world would become, from this perspective, hopelessly problematic. Unfortunately, the only way he could avoid such a consequence was by reasoning inconsistently: "I cannot help thinking," Reid muses, "that a great part of [Book IV of Locke's *Essay*] is an evident

³ Descartes, *Works*, II, 25-26.

⁴ This interpretation of Descartes' view of our perceptual relation to external reality comes most naturally out of his *Meditations*, and it is apparently this work which Reid had in mind when he declared Descartes to be the father of the ideal system. Elsewhere—in *The World*, the *Optics*, *The Passions of the Soul*, and to some extent the *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*—Descartes endorses positions much less antipathetic to, or more in harmony with Reid's own views. Some acknowledgement of this fact is made by Reid in his *Intellectual Powers* (I, 272), but it is arguable that their currents of concordance run deeper even than Reid allows.

refutation of the principles laid down in the beginning of it.”⁵ In short, that “the mind, in all its thoughts and reasonings, hath no other immediate object but its own ideas, which it alone does or can contemplate” (IV, I, 1), is not an assertion that cohabits comfortably with the contention that “the ideas of primary qualities of bodies, are resemblances of them, and their patterns do really exist in the bodies themselves” (II, VIII, 15) in the absence of any secure mechanism for transforming these patterns into ideas.

Reid does assert that both Descartes and Locke seem to have wavered some in their positions, treating images here as objects of perception, there as occasions of perception. The former alone, of course, would commit them to a theory of resemblance between the real object and its idea. And of Descartes he observes that it is the former which “has always been held to be the Cartesian doctrine” (I, 272). Certainly from our own vantage point we can affirm that the same has proven true of Locke. Furthermore, in Descartes as well as Locke, it is no more than the primary qualities which can be held to produce ideas that are resemblances of them.⁶

Berkeley and Hume both perceived the discord which existed between an idea-bound epistemology and a realist ontology, yet neither gave any thought to abandoning the idea-bound epistemology. Berkeley was content to abandon the realist ontology, in affirming the reality only of minds, their ideas, and God; Hume simply brought to the surface and underscored the skeptical implications of Locke’s philosophy, something which Locke himself avoided doing. At this point Reid enters the debate.

Reid shared Berkeley’s abhorrence toward skepticism; in fact he admits to having been quite taken by Berkeley early on in his career, no doubt for this reason as well as for Berkeley’s continued insistence that his was a philosophy which took seriously the outlook of

⁵ Reid, *Works*, vol. I, 432. All subsequent references to Reid will be to this Bracken edition of his works, and will appear in the text with the volume and page numbers given in parentheses; thus: (I, 432).

⁶ See Descartes, *Works*, I, 208-9, 217, 224 (*Principles* I, 48 & 69; II, 4); 165-66 (*Optics*, 113). A detailed treatment of the primary-secondary quality distinction is forthcoming in Sect. 1.2, Subsect. 5 of the present chapter.

the common man.⁷ However, Reid soon came to regard subjective idealism as no solution whatsoever to the question of the reality of knowledge, but rather as just one more aberration produced by the system of ideas. And so he addressed himself to this system, the very root of all these unsatisfactory doctrines—the presumption that our perceptual faculties supply our minds with something akin to a copy of reality, and that it is this copy alone which we can be said to know directly and unproblematically. He mounts a two-pronged thrust to overcome this pervasive presumption, offering on the one hand reflections and recommendations concerning the criteria of acceptability of any philosophical theory and showing how the system of ideas fails to meet these criteria, and developing on the other a theory of perception to supplant the one which formed an essential part of the now vanquished system.

1.1 *Commonsense Metaphilosophy*

The belief that it is the real world itself which we perceive directly is so widespread among mankind that it could well be termed universal; after all, even the philosophers who profess a contrary conviction live their lives in accord with this basic belief. Descartes repeatedly reminds us of this fact when playing his doubting game—a game which, if played properly, need only be engaged in once in one's life—and Hume provides similar assurances. Now while universal adherence to a certain conviction does not in and of itself constitute proof that such a conviction is well taken, it does in Reid's estimation confer upon it a certain preeminence—the benefit of a doubt, we might say. For a philosopher to overturn any such belief, he must come prepared for a long, hard campaign, and should bring to bear the most powerful arguments philosophy has to offer.

Can anything of this sort be detected among the adherents to the system of ideas? Not at all, judges Reid. Locke casually observes, concerning ideas: "I presume it will be easily granted me that there are such ideas in men's minds; every one is conscious of them in himself" (I, I, 8). Hume suggests that this "universal and primary

⁷ The rule Reid cites, that it is good "to think with philosophers and speak with the vulgar" (I, 139) is plucked practically verbatim from Berkeley's *Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, par. #51: "in such things we ought to 'think with the learned and speak with the vulgar.'"

notion of all men [the belief that we perceive objects directly] is soon destroyed by the slightest philosophy, which teaches us that nothing can ever be present to the mind but an image or perception."⁸

When we look closely at "the slightest philosophy," it usually turns out to consist in that family of arguments based on the alleged fallaciousness of the senses: because our senses "deceive" us on occasion not only is their information to be held generally suspect, but they are to be judged as providing information of a different sort—offering *ideas* to the mind for judgement, and not perceptions of the external world. Toward such arguments as these Reid directs several pointed considerations. For one thing, he observes, all our faculties—reason, memory, etc.—are equally liable to be deemed fallacious, since "all . . . are liable, by accidental causes, to be hurt and unfitted for their natural functions" (I, 338). Secondly, it is not reason which corrects, or even can correct the erroneous judgments we make in the use of our senses, but rather a "more accurate attention to the information we may receive by our senses themselves" (I, 339). And finally, since ideas themselves are neither true nor false—they just *are*—and the senses are allegedly responsible only for supplying ideas, then the senses cannot give any false testimony: "There is therefore a contradiction between the common doctrine concerning ideas and that of the fallaciousness of the senses. Both may be false, as I believe they are, but both cannot be true" (I, 339). In short, what little evidence is offered in support of the ideal theory falls far short of establishing it; and yet the theory itself, given the radical consequences that follow from it, stands in need of the very strongest of justifications.

The central topic in the above discussion proves to be one of the basic principles of commonsense: the fifth in Reid's enumeration of the first principles of contingent truths—"That those things do really exist which we distinctly perceive by our senses" (I, 445). It is time we took a close look at these principles and the role they play in his philosophy. To this end let us note first that "commonsense principles," as Reid understands this notion, are nothing like "popular

⁸ David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1963), 146.

principles,” to use Hegel’s term.⁹ Some may be popular, some “unpopular,” some may go quite unremarked by most of mankind. What they do is reflect the attitudes that permeate human experience to its very core, and which when articulated form judgments which we have no choice but to affirm—synthetic a priori truths, we might say, though Reid himself did not employ such terminology.

There are first principles of contingent truths and first principles of necessary truths, although despite what the names suggest, both types of principles are equally unavoidable to any experience of the world in which we find ourselves. Reid defines contingent truths as those which depend upon “some effort of will and power, which had a beginning and may have an end” (I, 441), and amplifies this a bit later on by characterizing contingency as “depend[ent] upon the will of Him who made the world” (I, 460). A necessary truth, on the other hand, is simply one whose contrary is impossible (regardless, apparently, of what God might decree). He enumerates twelve first principles of contingent truths, though there is no suggestion that this list is in any way exhaustive—in fact he expresses a fervent desire to see a comprehensive one drawn up. His treatment of the first principles of necessary truths is more open-ended yet, specifying no particular mathematical truths, for example, while nonetheless implying that there are many of them.

The first principles of contingent truths have what appears to be a subjective character about them—a misleading appearance, I will argue shortly. Principle one, for example, reads “I hold, as a first principle, the existence of everything of which I am conscious,” which includes “our present pains, our pleasures, our hopes, our fears, our desires, our doubts, our thoughts of every kind . . .” (I, 460). Principle two holds “that the thoughts of which I am conscious, are the thoughts of a being which I call *myself*, my *mind*, my *person*” (I, 443); principle ten “that there is a certain regard due to human testimony in matters of fact, and even to human authority in matters of opinion” (I, 450). Indeed, of the twelve principles which Reid mentions, only the twelfth—“that, in the phenomena of nature, what is to be, will probably be like to what has been in similar

⁹ G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel’s Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans by E.S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson, 3 vols. (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1983), III, 375.

circumstances" (I, 451)—does not in its formulation make explicit reference to "I," "we," or the mind or the will of man, although his commentary even on this one begins straightway by saying "We must have this conviction as soon as *we* are capable of learning anything from experience." (I, 451).¹⁰

This systematic relating of the first principles of contingent truths to human subjectivity makes them appear to be just an alternative set of categories of the understanding, like Kant's but not so well organized. To be sure, there are definite points of correspondence—I just remarked above that Reid's first principles could illuminatingly be thought of as synthetic a priori truths. Yet there is one crucial point at which the analogy breaks down. For Kant, the categories of the understanding participate in the *constitution* of experience *for beings like ourselves*; for Reid, the first principles of contingent truths are infallible *guides* to experience *in a world such as ours*. For Reid, that is, the world is given and our subjectivity is adjusted to it accordingly (by the wise contrivance of the Author of our being, he presumes); for Kant, it is the distinctive character of our subjectivity which makes the world what it is. It is only from a Kantian perspective that empirical realism can co-exist with transcendental idealism; from a Reidean perspective these two theories embody quite different sets of ontological commitments.

As for the first principles of necessary truths, it could be argued that certain of them have an analytic character, the grammatical truths, in particular, and perhaps even the logical and the mathematical.¹¹ Morality and taste, however, are also brought under the heading of necessary truths, and surely Reid does not regard these as mere definitional schemata. "That no man ought to be blamed for what it was not in his power to hinder: That we ought not to do to others what we would think unjust or unfair to be done to us in like circumstances" (I, 453), are principles far too dear to Reid for him to countenance their reduction to analyticity. Rather, he includes them among the first principles of necessary truths because he "cannot help thinking that a man who determined that there is more

¹⁰ Emphasis mine.

¹¹ Reid's suggestions concerning an alternative geometry—the "geometry of visibles"—might make it possible to argue that he saw geometric truths as synthetic (see I, 147-52).

moral worth in cruelty, perfidy, and injustice, than in generosity, justice, prudence, and temperance, would judge wrong, whatever his constitution was" (I, 454).

Those principles which Reid terms "metaphysical" are tied to human cognitive powers even more intimately than the above, though they are still placed among the principles of necessary truths. That qualities must inhere in a subject, that whatever begins to exist must have a cause, these are principles which apply directly to the world and its basic constitution, and thus they are termed metaphysical. But by the same token, Reid asserts that "if it were in our power to throw off their influence upon our practice and conduct, we could neither speak nor act like reasonable men" (I, 455).

Any first principle is, by virtue of its status as a first principle, indemonstrable. This is so because in order to demonstrate a first principle, some appeal would have to be made to a principle or principles more fundamental even than the one being demonstrated, and by definition there can *be* no such ulterior principle. Viewed from a slightly different perspective, demonstration, by its very nature, proceeds from the more obvious toward the more contestable. First principles, being precisely those than which none more obvious can be found, stand at the beginning of the process: they can ground demonstrations, but cannot submit to any.

There are, nevertheless, various ways by which first principles can be recognized—criteria for identifying them and for affirming their claim to primacy. One of these ways has already been alluded to above, namely, universal assent: "the consent of ages and nations, of the learned and unlearned, ought to have great authority with regard to first principles, where every man is a competent judge" (at least almost every man: the universal confidence which mankind shows regarding the reliability of our senses is only breached by "some lunatics . . . and . . . some philosophers") (I, 439, 259).

Another important test, capable of separating genuine first principles from any illegitimate pretenders is the technique of argument *ad absurdum*. If we were to take as true the contradictory of any given principle, then since "there is hardly any proposition, especially of those that may claim the character of first principles, that stands alone and unconnected" (I, 439), absurdities would soon disclose themselves, thus revealing the undeniability of the original proposition.

Reid's understanding of absurdity is interesting in this regard. Linking it with a particular psychological state—the emotion we associate with ridicule—he judges that our ability to detect absurdity is every bit as effective in putting aside false beliefs as is our rationality with its capacity to detect contradictions.

Here again, then, we see Reid devaluing somewhat the role of reason in discovering truth. Reason is only one among several tools with which we are equipped to understand and deal with reality. It enjoys no special claim to preeminence, and like the others (perception, memory, etc.) can be employed well or poorly. Reason's loss, from this point of view, can be viewed as perception's gain, and the skeptical power which reason is often taken to wield would be blunted even more.

Another indication that certain desiderata are candidates for the status of first principles occurs when they "appear so early in the minds of men that they cannot be the effect of education or of false reasoning" (I, 441). Reid's principle that "certain features of the countenance, sounds of the voice, and gestures of the body indicate certain thoughts and dispositions of the mind" (I, 449)—an essential component of his aesthetic theory—is one which might be confirmed in this fashion. But again it should be stressed that these techniques and indications (Reid mentions a few others, and even at that he does not take his list to be exhaustive) do not *prove* first principles—proof is irrelevant to them, but fortunately they don't require it anyway. What the existence of these alternative techniques and indicators does show is that at least we are not left exclusively at the mercy of our intuitions in these matters. Surely our intuitions count heavily in suggesting to us potential candidates, but the philosophical process does not terminate with intuition—indeed it barely begins there.

Having now had a glimpse at certain first principles of commonsense and seen how apodictic Reid treats them as being, the question arises as to how we came into the possession of these truths. Clearly, experience cannot inform us of anything this secure; indeed Reid's entire treatment of such principles suggests that if we were not already intimately acquainted with them our very capacity to undergo experience would be threatened. The alternative, then, is to place them somehow within ourselves, to view them as an endowment of nature—part of our natural constitution. This is the approach which Reid adopts: we are all outfitted by our creator with a stock of

principles that allow us to navigate through the world successfully, and to hope, at least, that we might one day live with one another harmoniously. From this perspective, assenting to the truth of these basic dicta and living our lives in accord with them are not, as the skeptic would have it, two independent activities irreducible one to the other—they both spring from the same source, our natural constitution.

It should by now be clear why it is illuminating and accurate to say that the principles of commonsense enjoy in Reid's philosophy something of the status of synthetic a priori judgements. They are synthetic in describing to us something of the character of our experience—they are far from being mere truths of definition. And they are a priori in the dual sense of having their truth confirmed by means other than empirical observation as well as being responsible, in a crucial sense, for the very possibility of empirical observation.

This last point suggests—and not by accident—that commonsense principles are acutely relevant to Reid's theory of perception. Before undertaking to consider this matter, though, let us briefly glance over the results of this section. Reid has attempted to refer to "the ideal system"—the philosophical approach which spawned such absurd doctrines as idealism and skepticism—by questioning the fundamental principle on which this system is grounded. To the ideal system he opposes his own principles of commonsense, doing so from the conviction that commonsense principles deserve priority until such time as it can be demonstrated that they are false or lead to absurd consequences. They cannot be *proven* to be true, but their evident nature can be exhibited in a variety of ways, including appealing to their universal acceptance, noting their occurrence in human behavior at its earlier stages, and pursuing various arguments ad absurdum. Accordingly they should be accepted into philosophical explanations with the same readiness that we allow them to govern our lives. Let us now see just how these principles do govern our lives, and how through their aid we can be said to be in direct contact with external reality.

1.2 *Theory of Perception*

To the extent that Reid's critique of the ideal system is successful, he assumes the obligation to provide an alternative accounts of human perception, one that makes no reference to any dubious

intermediaries which approach the mind bearing tales they have no right to tell. Quite simply, he must explain how we can be said to perceive the world directly. To the layman, such a task undoubtedly sounds too easy for words, but to the philosopher reared within the offending tradition it poses a formidable challenge. To answer this challenge, Reid develops an epistemology around the following definition: perception is an act of mind that produces a conception of the object perceived, and an immediate and irresistible conviction and belief in its present existence. To explicate this view of perception I will focus on the following issues: (1) the nature of perception and conception as acts rather than mental entities; (2) the role performed by sensation in the perceptual act, as well as a consideration of how sensation differs from perception; (3) the irresistibility in perception as a function of the mind's "nativistic" input; (4) the role of judgement in rendering perception immediate; and lastly (5) how the overall theory illuminates the primary-secondary quality distinction. This last topic is of special importance to the present project inasmuch as beauty is often likened by Reid to a secondary quality.

1. It is essential to Reid's undertaking to regard perception as an act rather than a result. In truth, he might have done better to speak of "perceiving," were there not that philosophic tradition standing behind him, whispering "perception" in his ear. Treated as an act, perception can be judged responsible for putting us in touch with the external world; treated as a result it could easily collapse into the realm of ideas and be just another image on the screen that the system of ideas draws between man and the world. In Reid's estimate, though, the idea that there might be some representational correspondence between the act of perception and its object constitutes something of a category mistake: the point of a sword, aside from its causal role in producing pain when it pricks the skin, has nothing further in common with that pain. The mind and the objects it perceives are simply different orders of being. Alleged analogies between the two normally cause more problems, philosophically, than they resolve (a point to be developed further in Section 1.3).

In saying, as Reid does, that perception produces a *conception*, he seems to teeter on the edge of "mental entity" discourse even more precariously than he did with "perception," since perception, without any article preceding it, is easily construed as an activity

word (similar to "attention," "instruction," etc.). In offering his definitions of certain key terms, however, Reid exhibits his preference for understanding conception actively, for he speaks there of "conceiving, imagining and apprehending," as alike signifying "an act of the mind which implies no belief or judgement at all" (I, 223).¹² In his editorial notes Hamilton adds "except of its own ideal reality," as if he were doing Reid a favor, but ideal realities are the very kind of philosophical fiction that Reid is intent on eliminating. And in support of Reid's effort it does seem that I could say "I imagine that we might take a swing through the great northwest next summer," without needing, in order to speak sensibly, a sequence of images in mind—like an internal viewmaster—of all, part, or even any of what I was imagining or hypothetically proposing. In any case, with respect to perception, the act of conception, when analytically isolated, reflects that certain sense of an object which the mind forms considered apart from any belief in the object's existence.

2. Another act of mind normally conjoined with perception is sensation. Sensation requires our close attention not just for the key role it plays in perception, but because it is a notion which Reid feels has been seriously misinterpreted by many a philosopher, and in addition—further complicating matters—it constitutes a point on which ordinary language is somewhat ambiguous, so Reid is obliged to forego the support of one of his usual allies.

The close alliance in human experience between sensation and perception has given rise to a certain ambiguity in the language we ordinarily use in characterizing these acts, in which sensation and perception tend to be confounded with one another. As a result, we might be given to speak of sensation as having an object, yet it is Reid's contention that perception alone has an object, while sensation "hath no object distinct from the act itself" (I, 229). Or conversely, we might find ourselves numbering among the qualities of an object some element which should never have left the domain of sensation. The key to keeping separate in thought those notions that have become clouded in everyday speech (or even in philosophical discourse) lies in careful introspective analysis.

¹² This reference includes the Hamilton quotation, as well.

Such analysis leads Reid to characterize sensation and perception in the following fashion.

When I smell a rose, there is in this operation both sensation and perception. The agreeable odour I feel, considered by itself, without relation to any external object, is merely a sensation. It affects the mind in a certain way; and this affection of the mind may be conceived, without a thought of the rose, or another object. This sensation can be nothing else than it is felt to be. Its very essence consists in being felt; and when it is not felt, it is not. . . .

Perception has always an external object; and the object of my perception, in this case, is that quality in the rose which I discern by the sense of smell. . . . [T]hat act of my mind by which I have the conviction and belief of this quality, is what in this case I call perception. (I, 310)

Reid's empiricist predecessors tend to demarcate this conceptual terrain differently, and less distinctly. Both Locke and Hume treat perception generically. For Locke, perception can have sensible content, as do the ideas of yellow, white, hard, soft, etc.; but he likewise speaks of "the perception of the operations of our own minds" (II, I, 4), which of course have no sensory content. And knowledge is defined as "nothing but the perception of the connexion and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our ideas" (IV, I, 2), which gives quite sweeping purview to the power of perception. Sensation, on the other hand, tends to be restricted to information provided by the senses. Then occasionally they are blurred together, as when he says "the ideas of white, cold, and round, . . . as they are sensations, or perceptions, in our understanding, I call them ideas" (II, VIII, 8).

Hume is more abrupt yet, in declaring all the perceptions of the mind to be of two sorts—impressions and ideas. Indeed, for him the term "perception" seems to take on all the generality that "idea" has for Locke. Since ideas follow upon impressions for Hume, the impressions themselves are all that can stand in the position that sensations would occupy in Locke. Obviously neither thinker comes close to drawing the boundaries as Reid does.

Reid is especially concerned to deny that sensations have any representational or ideational content to them, a notion which he feels Locke introduces into his own thinking in claiming that "the

sensations we have from primary qualities are resemblances of those qualities" (I, 313).¹³ Certainly when Locke says such things as "The particular bulk, number, figure, and motion of the parts of the fire or the snow, are really in them, whether anyone's senses perceive them or no" (II, VIII, 17), it does sound as if sensation itself would be transmitting a copy of these qualities. In fact only Berkeley is wholly absolvable from this charge, in Reid's estimation, for within Berkeleian idealism there is no question of sensations copying external objects since there are no external objects for them to copy; and since the ultimate source of our sensations turns out to be God, there is likewise no sense in alleging that our sensations copy or resemble their ultimate source.

Perhaps the tendency, reflected in our own ordinary discourse, to run sensations and perceptions together leads us to impute more definite content to them than they actually have (be it objective content, from a realist perspective, or ideational content from an idealist outlook). But the truth is, Reid claims, sensations and the qualities which occasion them bear no resemblance to one another. Here again, introspection provides the evidence to support this contention. "If a man runs his head with violence against a pillar," he says, "I appeal to him whether the pain he feels resembles the hardness of the stone" (I, 120), and he asserts that we can be as certain that our sensations are not like any quality of body, "as we can be, that the toothache is not like a triangle" (I, 131), and that "feelings of touch . . . do no more resemble extension than they resemble justice or courage" (I, 124).

Toothaches, collisions with pillars or swords and the like produce sensations that call attention to themselves. Under more normal circumstances, however, we might well overlook the sensations that led to our perception of an object, but they are there just the same:

¹³ I cite here Reid's characterization of Locke's position. Locke himself is more likely to say that *ideas* are resemblances of qualities, but the difference is not a sharp one. He says, for example, "the powers to produce those ideas in us . . . I call qualities; and as they are sensations or perceptions in our understanding, I call them ideas." (II, VIII, 8).

I touch the table gently with my hand, and I feel it to be smooth, hard, and cold. These are qualities of the table perceived by touch; but I perceive them by means of a sensation which indicates them. This sensation not being painful, I commonly give no attention to it. It carries my thought immediately to the thing signified by it, and is itself forgotten, as if it had never been. (I, 311)

This last sentence contains the key word for understanding precisely how sensation, for Reid, contributes to perception—that word is “signification.” Sensations do not offer copies of external reality to the mind, they provide us with signs of it, signs which, by the very constitution of our nature, we are inclined to interpret as suggestive of the nature of this external reality. There is a dual role performed by these signs. On the one hand they bring to the mind certain conceptions about the nature of the external world; on the other hand they activate certain dispositions native to the human mind itself—dispositions to endow the object with external existence, to place it in a spatio-temporal framework, to understand it as an element within a certain causal sequence, and so on.

3. In characterizing perception as producing “an irresistible conviction and belief” in an object’s present existence Reid is claiming that it is part of our natural constitution to interpret our sensations as bearing testimony to a world possessed of certain characteristics. From what other source, he wonders, could such a belief come? Suppose we judge a body to be hard:

How come we by the belief of it? Is it self-evident, from comparing the ideas, that such a sensation could not be felt, unless such a quality of bodies existed? No. Can it be proved by probable or certain arguments? No; it cannot. Have we got this belief, then, by tradition, by education, or by experience? No; . . . Shall we then throw off this belief as having no foundation in reason? Alas, it is not in our power; it triumphs over reason, and laughs at all the arguments of a philosopher. (I, 121)

Reasoning in support of the acceptance of such a belief is just as futile as reasoning designed to argue it away: our conviction as to the real existence of the object of our sensations is epistemologically prior to and more profound than any discursive arguments we might bring to bear on such a belief.

To learn what other principles form the nativistic input of the mind with respect to experience we can consult Reid's list of first principles of contingent and necessary truths. The one presently under consideration is number five among the first principles of contingent truths: "That those things do really exist which we distinctly perceive by our senses, and are what we perceive them to be" (I, 445). Confidence in our memory, our own personal identity, in the causal interrelatedness of events, in the substantiality of the world—all these find articulation among Reid's principles of commonsense. All of them, therefore, must originate in our very nature itself, for—to repeat—no other source could endow them with the irresistibility which they possess.

Reid regularly credits our mental makeup to "the wise contrivance of our Maker," or to the "Author of our being." The unwary reader might accordingly infer that he is grounding his conviction as to the reliability of human perception (and, for that matter, memory and reason itself) upon a principle similar to that which Descartes employed—that God is not a deceiver. Only if we can trust God, that is, can we trust that the faculties with which he has endowed us provide adequate measure of the world. Though Reid is of no mind to think that God might be a deceiver, he nevertheless does not accept this principle as epistemologically basic. In his own words, "a man would believe his senses though he had no notion of a deity. He who is persuaded that he is the workmanship of God, and that it is a part of his constitution to believe his senses, may think that a good reason to confirm his belief. But he had the belief before he could give this or any other reason for it" (I, 329).

4. Reid's contention that perception produces an *immediate* belief in the existence of the object perceived contains both affirmation and denial. What it affirms is that judgment is an integral component of perception. Without judgment, perception would collapse into conception, or what he terms "simple apprehension," but even these are notions which we reach only in reflection—by thinking judgment *out* of perception and taking note of what is left. In actual perception itself belief in the existence of the perceived object comes to us without reflection.

Since judgment involves the affirmation of a state of affairs, and implies that such a state of affairs is articulable in a proposition of the standard subject-predicate form, it follows that any perception is

so articulable (even though in real life, of course, we do not give verbal expression to all or even most of our perceptions).

What Reid aims to avoid in insisting that perception produces belief immediately is the empiricist account in which there is an inferential leap from the data of sense to some determination of the way the world is. We do not, he is saying, receive sensory information, evaluate it, *then* judge that an object possesses certain qualities. This model of perception leads straightaway to skepticism, for the inference involved is at best probabilistic and at worst groundless (proceeding, as it would, from the mental to the extra-mental). But where no inference is involved, there can be no question of an inference going astray. Reid's conviction that we perceive external reality *directly* requires that we make such perceptual judgments immediately. And indeed, careful introspection seems to favor Reid's interpretation over any temporal sequential interpretation: does not our perceptual experience invariably come to us whole and complete? Do we ever find ourselves reflecting on our sensory information before making a judgment? Even when we are not sure what we just saw—was it a raccoon that just passed under our headlights or a fox?—an objective judgment is made immediately that something passed under our headlights, *but what was it?* We do not consult the content of our consciousness, puzzle over it for a while, then make a determination.

Nor is perception a process that begins with simple ideas that then combine with and relate to one another leading ultimately to the complex end product that we perceive. To be sure, perception contains distinct elements that are isolable from one another through a process of reflective analysis—such a process is what we have been discussing for the past several pages. It requires time, however, in order to be carried out; the actual perception itself, the sensation bearing its objective signification and activating our native interpretative dispositions, occurs immediately. Perception in all its fullness is the given in human experience.

5. While Reid, as we have now had ample opportunity to see, was intent on refuting the system of ideas to which Locke was one of the principal adherents and replacing it in the philosophical consciousness with the view that we stand in direct contact with external reality, he nevertheless accepted the distinction—for which Locke is famous (or infamous)—between primary and secondary

qualities of bodies. This is at first glance peculiar, since for Locke the very distinction was expressed within, and brought greater articulateness to the system of ideas itself. It is worthwhile, then, to observe how Reid goes about preserving the distinction without compromising his own realist ontology.

Reid credits Locke with being the coiner of the terms "primary" and "secondary" qualities (I, 141),¹⁴ and in addition to adopting these terms for his own use, he accepts the Lockean categorizations as well: primary qualities being "extension, divisibility, figure, motion, solidity, hardness, softness and fluidity," secondary qualities being "sound, colour, taste, smell, and heat or cold" (I, 313). What is more, the notion of a quality, for each thinker, involves a power, on the part of an object, to produce a sensation in us. As we have had occasion to note, however, sensations perform very different roles in their respective epistemologies, and so we can rightly expect Reid's characterization of secondary qualities to veer sharply away from Locke's at this point.

In Locke, it will be recalled, a sensation tends to blur together with an idea, with which latter the mind is alleged to be directly acquainted. The primary-secondary quality distinction is thus formulated as follows: should the quality responsible for producing the sensation be a primary quality, there will be a direct relationship of resemblance between the idea (with which the sensation is identified) and the actual quality itself; while if it is a secondary quality, no such relationship can be imputed. Given such a formulation as this, the distinction seems positively to beg for the kind of critique Bishop Berkeley obligingly provided; namely, that to establish the supposed correspondence between the idea and the thing turns out to be an unperformable operation, since we can never gain direct access to the thing as it is in itself in order justly to compare it to its correlate idea. Instead, we must forever settle for no more than the thing-as-apprehended. And yet at the same time, we are obliged to trust that certain of the qualities which are involved in our

¹⁴ Hamilton's typical impatience with Reid's lack of scholarly thoroughness seems particularly forced on this matter. He cites only Aristotle as an antecedent, then observes that Aristotle meant something other than what Locke meant. It sounds as if Locke rather does have the field to himself on this.

apprehension of this thing do genuinely inhere in it, while others exist entirely as states of mind of the apprehending subject.

On Reid's epistemology, however, the idea that we have access to the primary qualities of bodies is not at all the problem that it is for Locke, for here there is no question of the presence or absence of a correspondence between the idea and the thing: there is only the direct perception of the thing. Hence, one can with complete propriety be said to be aware of an object's primary qualities.

A problem of a different sort seems to rear up, however, for it could appear that this same epistemology places us in direct contact with an object's secondary qualities, as well, for do we not perceive its color, taste, odor, and ultimately its beauty or ugliness, through signs of the same type as those which inform us of its shape and solidity? Does not Reid's view, then, run the opposite risk to that of Locke, and threaten to render all qualities primary? How, we must ask, does a common-sense realist manage to maintain such a distinction? Let us assemble Reid's answer to these questions.

Reid views the distinction in two different manners. One way is to emphasize differences in the manner in which we *apprehend* primary vs. secondary qualities; another way is to focus on the differences inherent in the qualities themselves which lead us to apprehend them differently. These two approaches constitute but slightly different vantage points on one and the same issue, and they fit together quite harmoniously.

From the first point of view, Reid tells us that sensations, through which we become aware of any qualities, tend, in our apprehension of a secondary quality, to become "an object of our attention while those which belong to the primary are not" (I, 315). "The feelings of touch," for example, "which suggest primary qualities, have no names, nor are they ever reflected upon. They pass through the mind instantaneously and serve only to introduce the notion and belief of external things" (I, 124). Those sensations involved in what we would term smelling a rose, tasting a chocolate or feeling the warmth of a room on coming in from the cold are more likely to be dwelt upon in and of themselves. Undeniably each of these experiences likewise communicates to us a sense that there is some definite property of the object or the environment in question, and we may sometimes even "perceive through" the sensation straight to the object itself. We do direct ourselves towards

rose gardens in pursuit of a certain sensation, and give a wide berth to the occasional passing skunk in avoidance of another, thus giving clear evidence of our confidence in the objective grounding of these sensations. And yet when these sensations are upon us, especially when they are pleasant in nature, we can become lost in them, such that, when we close our eyes and inhale deeply, the rose virtually vanishes from our consciousness, and our sensation of its scent utterly dominates.

We are equally dependent upon sensations in order to become aware of the shape of an object, of its solidity, or of its motion—its primary qualities. However, unless some extreme circumstance is involved—the table has parts adhering to one another in a manner that renders it quite solid and we have just banged our knee on it—we will normally pass straightaway, in our perceptual experience, to the object itself, to the extent that we do not even have a clear notion at all of what the attendant sensation, under normal circumstances, actually is.

A second feature of primary qualities which cannot be attributed to secondary qualities, according to Reid, is what might be termed intersensory verifiability. The skilled carpenter both observes *and* feels his corners and joints to assure that they are square and smooth. If the eyes from time to time deceive, the fingertips are there to provide further information. Even the ears can make their contribution, if one drags a fingernail across the surface and listens for any irregularities in the flow of the sound. Reid is impressed by the way in which the blind manage to make their way in, and discourse intelligently about the world, a world for the apprehension of which the eye seems to be the most expedient sensory device imaginable (I, 142-44). Shape, motion and solidity are not only seen but felt. Indeed, it is perfectly reasonable, Reid maintains, to expect a blind man to come to a basic understanding of astronomy, through extending the inferences he makes on the basis, obviously, of touch and hearing alone.

The secondary qualities, however, seem to be locked into a single sensory organ. A smell is a smell, a taste is a taste, and where disputes arise, the eye or ear cannot be called upon to resolve them. If a flower smells like a marigold, then even though it may look like a rose—even though it may *be* a rose!—there is no rescuing it: it still smells like a marigold, and that's that. Indeed, from this and the

other considerations developed above, it is clear that with secondary qualities there is greater room for disputes among men (and doubts, on the part of individuals) about just what they are, and less solid means of resolving such disputes to the satisfaction of all.

From the more objective point of view, we find Reid asserting “our senses give us a direct and distinct notion of primary qualities, and inform us of what they are in themselves. But of the secondary qualities, our senses give us only a relative and obscure notion” (I, 313).

The shape of a sphere communicates itself directly to us, through its visible appearance. What makes it appear spherical to us is its sphericity. And even though, on attending to the visible appearance of things in a manner common only to painters, we become aware that pure sphericity may appear differently under different circumstances, at different distances, under different lighting conditions, etc., nevertheless these different visible appearances are naturally understood by us, and are all immediately taken by us to be signs of the presence of a spherical object. Thus it makes perfectly good sense both for the common man and the philosopher to say that the sphericity of the object is perceived by us because the object itself is spherical.

Contrast this with, say, our perception of a sound. We may hear a note produced by a flute, may immediately recognize the instrument to *be* a flute, may even (if we are burdened with absolute pitch) immediately recognize just what note it is. But this sound is in no way a constitutive element of the flute, in the way in which sphericity is constitutive of a sphere. It is produced by vibrations in a column of air, which are carried through the surrounding atmosphere to our ear. The sound and the sounding instrument are utterly dissimilar “entities.” Our perception of the former is relative to a set of circumstances—the material of the instrument, the length of the column of air, the atmosphere through which it is carried and our own hearing apparatus. No one of these factors *is* the sound, proper, in the way in which the sphere is the sphere, proper. If atmospheric or acoustic conditions were to be altered, so that the technique for producing a C were instead to lead us to hear a G, we would have no choice but to insist that the note in question actually was a G. If, on the other hand, a sphere appeared flat to us from a certain distance, we could easily adjust to this particular visual manifestation

and judge, simply, "It's a sphere—that's the way spheres often look at this distance."

Color, in light of these considerations, is also "relative and obscure" in the sense that, while we know *that* we're looking at something red, we may well not know *why* it is red. And even if we should have an answer at hand—a scientific explanation (Reid would have said a "philosophical explanation") of the phenomenon—it is likely only to assure us further that redness is a quality apprehended by "eyes like ours," and, again, is not inherent to the object as sphericity is to spheres.

Given this characterization of the two types of quality let us now consider Reid's account of how it is that both, secondary as well as primary, are legitimately attributable to bodies. When I handle a marble, my sensations enable me to discern its hardness and its sphericity; when I look at it, I perceive it to be a limpid blue in color. What Reid is claiming is that I detect the former pair of properties precisely because it *is* hard and it *is* spherical. The limpidity and the blueness, however, owe their appearance to some deeper set of causal circumstances which act on me in a certain way and lead me to attribute these properties to the object as well. These other, deeper causes are themselves genuine properties of the object, and they behave every bit as regularly as the primary qualities do, yet due to their peculiar manner of manifestation, my perception of the object which possesses them cannot capture anything of their essential nature.

The denial of objective reality to secondary qualities would only constitute a weaker corollary of the general theory of ideas which Reid argues so strenuously against. In particular, at least two of the first principles of necessary truths would be violated. The first of his metaphysical principles holds, in part, "that the qualities which we perceive by our senses must have a subject, which we call body" (I, 454), and clearly the notion that a secondary quality has no being apart from the idea we have of it would run afoul of this dictum. In this regard, however, it is important to note that it is not the blue-as-perceived which constitutes the quality whose reality is assured by this principle. The real quality consists in the (as yet) unknown causal factor or factors which are responsible for my perception. Philosophers who take the blue-as-perceived to *be* the secondary

quality have already taken a major step toward encompassing their own demise.

The second metaphysical principle holds that “whatever begins to exist must have a cause which produces it” (I, 455). Were secondary qualities to be relegated to ideal status their causal connection to the world would be severed. Causality as we understand it implies regularity—same set of causal circumstances, same effect—but that which existed as idea only could presumably be fabricated in any number of incomprehensible and unpredictable ways. If I look at the marble ten times and if each time I perceived it to be blue, I can trust that it is because there is a set of causal conditions that is regularly at work, even though the objective nature of these conditions, as well as the mechanics by which they produce their effect on me, is largely or completely unknown. Should I come to see it as greenish after a while, I can likewise trust that as the day wears on the conditions of illumination undergo some change. Should I henceforth see it only as greenish I can then trust that it has undergone some fundamental change; should I find that I am seeing a lot of things that I once took to be blue as green, I can infer that the fundamental change that has taken place is in me, in my visual mechanism somewhere. And should variations in the description of the marble occur from one subject to another, it would again make more sense to appeal to differences in the sensory capacities of the individuals, rather than to imagine that each of us dwells in our own unique reality.

Principle five of the first principles of contingent truths also bears directly on this question. It holds, let us recall, “that those things do really exist which we distinctly perceive by our senses, and are what we perceive them to be” (I, 445). This would not mean that the blue, as it exists in our sensation, genuinely inheres in the blue object, but only that the causal conditions which occasion the sensation do genuinely inhere therein.

Briefly, then, “a secondary quality is the unknown cause or occasion of a well-known effect; and the same name is common to the cause and the effect” (I, 315). And Reid’s strategy in objectifying secondary qualities is basically the same as in his larger critical enterprise. He is suggesting that a far greater absurdity would be perpetrated by calling into question certain first principles of commonsense than by simply abandoning the hypothesis which

alleges that we are directly in touch only with ideas and which hopelessly confounds the qualities of bodies—especially the secondary qualities—with such ideas.

1.3 *Activity and Causality*

Given the nature of Reid's expression theory and the close alliance it urges between beauty and such elements of reality as design and moral excellence, a few words need to be said on his views regarding causality and active power.

Actually there is an immediate link between these latter concepts and his distinctions touched on earlier between mind and matter. Matter is viewed by Reid as being essentially passive and inert in nature, while mind is essentially active. These characterizations are hardly unique to Reid, for throughout the history of western philosophy, up to his time and well beyond, it is the exception rather than the rule to find a thinker who is willing to attribute genuine active power to matter. Nor are there many philosophers who deny all activity to mind and its functions, although a certain measure of passivity, involving our receptivity to sensory stimuli, is commonly asserted. It might even be argued that the very denial of activity to mind could be construed to be an act which we may or may not be willing to perform.

Once one becomes committed to the view that matter is inert and mind active, considerable difficulties arise as to how a world such as the one we inhabit is possible. The uncontestable fact that nature, in forms as diverse as earthworms and earthquakes, seems to move on its own, combined with the radical difference in natures asserted to be possessed by the two components of reality render the explanation of physical phenomena highly problematic. Interactionism, parallelism, occasionalism have all been thrown into the breach to overcome these difficulties.

Reid has no new "-ism" to offer to the debate. Such theories can never amount to more than metaphysical hypotheses, and he is highly suspicious toward any such hypothetical enterprises (see I, 234-36). That mind and matter are utterly distinct, however, appears to him to be as fundamental a desideratum as any could be. That some form of interaction takes place between the two he takes to be similarly incontestable: what more evidence could I want than that which is provided by watching my hand propel my pen across this paper

under the direction of my mind? Yet the exact process involved is one which lies fundamentally beyond our capacity for knowing. I am conscious at least that I possess and exercise certain powers, but I am not and can never be conscious of these powers themselves: "As long, therefore, as mankind are beings who can deliberate and resolve and will . . . they must believe the existence of active power in themselves and in others, and, therefore, must have an idea of active power" (II, 517).

Such a notion is essential, according to Reid, in order for morality to be the meaningful element within human affairs which we know it to be. For how could we be held responsible for any deeds if the causes of these deeds did not originate within ourselves? The stone which breaks the glass bears no responsibility for the misdeed—such responsibility falls solely upon the individual who exerted the effort to throw the stone.

Concerning the rest of nature, both animate and inanimate, it is God or Nature which, for Reid, supplies very close to all the efficient causal power responsible for producing the effects we observe: "*Nature* is the name we give to the efficient cause of innumerable effects which fall daily under our observation" (II, 523). I say "very close to all" since Reid in his essay on taste seems to suggest that certain of the higher creatures exhibit some measure of intelligence, however limited, which we find room to appreciate. And yet he does assert in *Active Powers* that "it seems most probable that such beings only as have some degree of understanding and will can possess active power" (II, 525), and since will is a faculty attributable only to man and God, not even the higher animals should be thought to possess active power. Consequently, all which we observe in nature that does not originate in human acts of volition is attributable to God's will. "But whether He acts immediately in the production of those events, or by subordinate intelligent agents, or by instruments that are unintelligent, and what the number, the nature, and the different offices, of those agents or instruments may be—these I apprehend to be mysteries placed beyond the limits of human knowledge" (II, 522). Regardless of how he acts, however, a sizable portion even of human behavior must be traced back to God as its source. All involuntary functions and movements must be ascribed to God's agency, for evidently our own will is not active in

their production, yet they do occur, and the only other conceivable cause is God.

It is apparent that of Reid's numerous philosophical contentions his treatment of natural causality is the most "dated." Scientific progress in the two centuries that have followed his work has vastly increased our understanding of the dynamics of matter, enabling us to see, or at least to form reasonable hypotheses as to how it might act. One even wonders how "commonsensical" are his views on causality: he cites no principles of commonsense which necessitate precisely this one interpretation; the common man might find himself quite at odds with Reid on the matter; and those philosophers who would have agreed with him would not have done so because they *observed* he was correct, but because they shared certain speculative presumptions. As it turns out, this is an area where certain expressionist theories of a century later did a lot of tinkering in an attempt to preserve something of Reid's basic aesthetic outlook while paring away certain of his metaphysical commitments. This is a matter to be pursued in the final chapter.

2. *Aesthetics*

In this section I present Reid's aesthetic theory, highlighting the following three areas: his contention that beauty has its own first principles (2.1); his insistence that beauty is properly attributed to the beautiful object and not the experiencing subject (2.2); and the expression theory of beauty which he develops (2.3). These are not three independent topics tacked together; rather, the first two function as necessary conditions for the third. Not only would there be no expression theory of beauty without there being first principles of beauty, there would be no aesthetic explanation, properly speaking, at all. One could compile catalogues of aesthetic responses to various stimuli—a simple but endless empirical enumeration—but without the structural guidance provided by first principles the mass of "evidence" would forever retain its shapelessness.

2.1 *First Principles of Taste*

In judging that taste has its own first principles Reid is asserting that taste is governed by certain axioms that are every bit as firmly grounded as the axioms of geometry or the principles which govern

human cognition. It was noted briefly above,¹⁵ but deserves to be underscored at this point, that Reid groups taste among the grammatical, logical, mathematical, moral, and metaphysical realms under the heading of first principles of necessary truths. Even cognition itself, as we saw, is governed by principles some of which are of contingent and others of necessary truths. Based on the explanation we gave at that time of the differences between these two classes of truths, it is evident that Reid was of no mind to reduce true beauty to any (mere) relationship between a given object and the powers peculiar to human cognition. True beauty, rather, is to be grasped in the same manner that we grasp the truth of a particular geometric theorem; and should we fail to grasp it, its beauty would not be diminished in the slightest—Euclid, after all, did not create geometry, he merely uncovered a certain family of truths and formalized them into a science.

To explain further this manner of conceiving of the first principles of taste, Reid distinguishes between taste which is natural as opposed to acquired, and taste which is rational as opposed to animal (I, 453). Acquired taste fluctuates with custom and habit. Much of the diversity in taste that can be observed from culture to culture and era to era is a result of our acquired taste; an individual with one set of aesthetic values when placed amidst another culture with a different set, can and probably will, over the years, come more and more to adopt the values of the new culture. Yet not every matter that pertains to taste need be so variable. Reid believed there are still beauties which span different cultures and different eras, and which can be and are apprehended by individuals of the most diverse backgrounds, and it is beauties such as these which will be detectable by that aspect of our taste which comes to us naturally, not that which is developed by one mode or another of acculturation: “A fine taste may be improved by reasoning and experience; but if the first principles of it were not planted in our minds by nature, it could never be acquired” (I, 122).

Animal taste, as Reid understands it, refers to those preferences which we all have (in varying degrees) for sights and sounds that attract our attention solely by virtue of the manner in which they strike our senses. “Children are delighted with brilliant and gaudy

¹⁵ See Section 1.1.

colors, with romping and merry mirth, with feats of agility, strength, or cunning; and savages have much the same taste as children" (I, 453). Our taste, however, is not exhausted in our attractability to such phenomena. There are other things which appeal to the rational side of our nature, the pleasure in which will be less sensuous and more contemplative, and it is these latter phenomena which we will find to be in accordance with the first principles of taste. "In those operations of taste which are rational, we judge of the real worth and excellence of the object, and our love and admiration is guided by that judgment. In such operations there is judgment as well as feeling, and the feeling depends upon the judgment we form of the object" (I, 453). In that taste which is deemed "animal," whatever feelings an object produces will be either prior to or independent of the rational judgment we (may or may not) make with regard to the object. If, but only if, we do possess such natural and rational tastes do we have any right to infer that there are first principles of taste, and Reid is thoroughly convinced that our taste does include these attributes. Taste that is natural and rational "may be true or false, according as it is founded on a true or false judgment. And if it may be true or false, it must have first principles" (I, 453).

It would have been appreciated if Reid had supplied one or two concrete instances of such principles, but unfortunately he does not. Instead, he presents examples of judgments that are much too particular in their reference to serve as genuine first principles, and all of these judgments, in fact, make reference to what beauty is *not*, not to what it is: that a beautiful face cannot be lacking an eye or a nose, or have a mouth off to one side. Two eyes, one nose and a properly centered mouth constitute but the barest conditions for a beautiful face, even if we could accept that there might be first principles of beautiful faces. Then again, Reid does not offer any sample first principles of mathematical truths either, though in this case we have no doubt that we could turn to the first page of Euclid and find a number of viable candidates.

Reid devotes much of the remainder of this section on first principles of taste to sketching out the expression theory which he develops more fully at the end of *Intellectual Powers*, but this likewise cannot be taken to constitute the first principle we are looking for. For one thing, it is only a theory; many other such theories are possible (and actual), a fair number of them are

reasonably cogent, and nothing this dubitable has any right to claim first principle status. More importantly, though, the expression theory seeks to explain the manner in which we apprehend beauty, and since apprehension involves cognition and much of cognition is governed by first principles of contingent truths, it follows that such a theory cannot supply us with principles possessing unconditioned necessity.

This is not to say that there are no other principles, some of contingent, some of necessary truths, which occupy key positions in Reid's account of the objectivity of beauty and in his expression theory. There are indeed a number of such principles at work in both of these areas, and the failure to recognize the vital roles which they play there can lead to serious misunderstandings and misattributions. Consequently, it is one aim of the present study to bring to light the instances where first principles are at work, even if, indeed especially if, Reid himself was not explicit in calling the reader's attention to them.

2.2 *The Objectivity of Beauty*

The propriety of attributing beauty to the occasioning object and not the experiencing subject was undeniably Reid's principal obsession in the aesthetic domain. He pursues the matter relentlessly in his "Essay on Taste," alluding to it in Observations one and six of Chapter 1, developing his position further in Chapter 3 ("Of Grandeur"), and returning to it again in Chapter 4 ("Of Beauty"). His treatment of objectivity forms an appropriate complement to his contention that there are first principles of taste, for those principles supposedly ground any claims to the effect that aesthetic judgments are universalizable, and universality and objectivity are generally thought either to stand together or to fall together. The notable exception to this alliance is of course provided by Kant, who deemed that objective universality, following as it did from concepts, would thereby be stifling to the disinterested pleasure required of any aesthetic experience. He therefore sought to demonstrate that it would be possible to attribute a *subjective* universality to our aesthetic judgments, grounded in the fact that we share similar cognitive and imaginative capabilities and so ought under similar circumstances to experience similar pleasures. Without presuming to decide here and now which thinker is correct, I wish merely to

indicate that this is one issue on which Reid happens to be in step with a considerable segment of western philosophy.

Reid's critical ire on the question of the objectivity of beauty was piqued by thinkers such as Hutcheson, who asserted that "beauty, like other names of sensible ideas, properly denotes the perception of some mind;"¹⁶ and Hume, who contended that "beauty and deformity, more than sweet and bitter, are not qualities in objects but belong entirely to the sentiment."¹⁷ Actually, the continuation of Hume's assertion provides the stepping off point for Reid's analysis, for Hume proceeds to observe that there are nevertheless certain qualities in objects suited to producing the appropriate sentiment. Nothing more than this bare acknowledgement, however, is forthcoming from Hume. He shows no inclination to locate beauty in such qualities, concentrating instead on the subjective component in aesthetic experience; as a result, the criteria of taste which he develops are not criteria for determining what makes an object beautiful, but rather what makes a critic trustworthy.

Reid, on the other hand, plunges directly into a consideration of what constitutes a quality of an object, and emerges with the conviction that whatever it is that leads us to call an object beautiful decidedly deserves to be regarded as a property of that object. He frequently likens beauty to a secondary quality, observing, for example, that "the internal power of taste bears a great analogy . . . to the external," in the manner in which the latter discerns secondary qualities (I, 490). A bit further on, he claims "the same argument shows equally" that the reduction of beauty to nothing more than sensations or feelings is just as improper as the similar reduction of secondary qualities (I, 490). And again, he judges that "some of the qualities that please a good taste resemble secondary qualities" (I, 491). Since we examined the nature of secondary qualities with some care earlier in this chapter¹⁸, let us merely remind ourselves of the conclusions that were reached.

¹⁶ Frances Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (New York: Garland Publishing Co., 1971), 7; cited by Reid in I, 499.

¹⁷ David Hume, *Of the Standard of Taste and Other Essays* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), 11.

¹⁸ See Sect. 1.2, Subsect. 5.

First, in apprehending secondary qualities, Reid claimed that we attend more closely to the sensations themselves than we do in the case of primary qualities; secondly, secondary qualities are only apprehended by one sense, while primary qualities are intersensorially verifiable; thirdly, our senses give us only a relative and obscure notion of secondary qualities, as opposed to the direct and distinct notion which primary qualities convey. The upshot of Reid's analysis was that secondary qualities are the unknown causes or occasions of certain well-known effects. It is these unknown causes which genuinely inhere in objects and therefore fully deserve to be regarded as properties thereof. And as we noted earlier, several of his principles of commonsense can be invoked to supply as firm a grounding as possible for this contention.

To the extent that beauty can be likened to a secondary quality, then, it can be regarded as a genuine quality of the beautiful object. Reid even makes explicit reference to another first principle in this very context—the seventh principle of contingent truths which holds “that the natural faculties, by which we distinguish truth from error, are not fallacious” (I, 447)—when he judges, “To say that there is, in reality, no beauty in those objects in which all men perceive beauty, is to attribute to man fallacious senses. But we have no ground to think so disrespectfully of the Author of our being” (I, 500). Beauty is therefore a term designating a quality in much the same sense that “*astringent, narcotic, epispastic, caustic* and innumerable others signify qualities of bodies, which are only known by their effects on animal bodies” (I, 236).

Reid sometimes refers to secondary qualities as “occult” qualities of bodies, due to the obscure nature of their origin. Beauty, too, is described by him in this fashion, since the causality at work in producing its sensory manifestation is a mystery to us. Since there is a sense in which this likeness holds, a sense in which it doesn't hold, and since in treating of the matter Reid seems to speak against himself, let us pursue the comparison.

Beauty and secondary qualities in general are alike occult in that we have no direct acquaintance with the causal factors which in either case produce the appropriate sensations in us. However, the respects in which these causes are unknown to us differ from one case to the other. When Reid speaks of secondary qualities as the unknown causes of known effects it is reasonable (indeed, he gives

us reason) to hope that one day these unknown causes will be fathomed: the progress of natural science is all that is required for their de-mystification. Concerning beauty, though, let us remind ourselves that in Reid's analysis, *all* efficient causality traces back to the activity either of the Deity or ourselves, although how He works or how we work in producing sensible effects—that mysterious transference from mind to matter—is something which Reid regards as in essence ungraspable. This mental factor is not at issue where the question has to do with those unknown causes he calls secondary qualities, but it is very much at issue where beauty is involved, for (as we will explore more carefully in the next section) the expression theory holds that we find certain things to be beautiful precisely for their ability to lead us to a contemplation of their so-called spiritual interior. The mechanism by which mind reveals its activity through matter is just as mysterious here as it is in the case of secondary qualities; the striking difference between the two cases is that only in the case of beauty does the spiritual origin of the appropriate effect *really matter*.

Now it is the case, Reid claims, that in those instances where we clearly apprehend not only that something is beautiful but *the reason why* we find it beautiful—which should happen often enough, given that beauty has first principles and that we are in touch with them—beauty stands more akin to a primary than a secondary quality (I, 492). On this point, however, Reid seems to drift out of line with the rest of his thinking, since as we have just noted, he does hold that reasons can be supplied for secondary as well as for primary qualities. For example, he praises Newton for his fruitful investigation into the nature of color while holding out hope that we will someday come to understand what factors in bodies produce the other qualities we regard as secondary. Yet should this come to pass (as it has), these qualities would not cease to be secondary qualities: ignorance of causal factors is a strictly contingent matter; what is essential and invariant is whether or not a body produces its effect upon us directly.

Let us synthesize the above analysis briefly. The perceived effects of all qualities, beauty included, stem ultimately from some cause which can never of itself be an object of perception—the mind of man or the mind of God. Intermediary causal factors are knowable both in the case of secondary qualities and in the case of beauty

(primary qualities exert their influence directly). Such factors would for example answer the question "Why is the sky blue?" as well as the question "Why is that face beautiful?" Beauty differs from secondary qualities proper in that our understanding of it—our answer to the second question in the previous sentence—will always lead us to the contemplation of some state of mind, while our answer to the first of those questions need not and in fact should not lead to any such result.

I find Reid mentioning or alluding to at least two other reasons why we should stop short of calling beauty a genuine secondary quality. For one thing, perception of beauty is dependent upon an individual's ability to perceive the full range of qualities, both primary and secondary, and merely to possess this latter ability still does not assure that one will be able to see beauty where it exists: "It is impossible to perceive the beauty of an object without perceiving the object, or, at least, conceiving it" (I, 492). To give an analogy, one must first be able to skate to play ice-hockey, but just being able to skate in no way assures that one will be able to master all the other skills required of an ice-hockey player. Normal powers of perception are thus necessary but not sufficient conditions for perceiving beauty. Many an individual has keen eyesight but no sense of what kind of proportions set off a scene as beautiful, acute hearing but no capacity to appreciate the touching quality of a particular melody. Beauty, therefore, seems to be a quality once removed from both primary and secondary qualities. The above consideration suggests this further difference, that while qualities, both primary and secondary, are simple, beauty is complex and relational. This is what Reid has in mind when he asserts "beauty and deformity in an object, result from its nature or structure" (I, 492). It is when we start to think such thoughts as "too much red," or "the line on the left carries too far towards the center" that we are graduating from the level of merely perceiving an object, and are coming to apprehend it as potentially beautiful. At this point we are becoming attuned to the relational properties the object possesses.

These additional factors undoubtedly contribute to making judgments of beauty much more variable, from subject to subject, than even judgments of secondary qualities seem to be. After all, most of the world does agree that the sky is blue, gardenias smell sweet and lemons taste sour. Perceptions of secondary qualities may be a bit

eccentric at times, and it may indeed be hard to establish criteria for sorting out veridical and non-veridical judgements where they are concerned, but the situation is ever so much worse where beauty is in question. After all, maxims have been formulated (and widely accepted) asserting the indisputability of tastes, or the radical individuality of each person's perception of beauty. People generally need to be argued *into* accepting that redness is not, strictly speaking, *in* the red object, but they usually need to be argued *out* of believing that beauty resides in the eye of the beholder.

Let me sum up the results of this section (keeping in mind the earlier sections dealing with secondary qualities and causality) and add a reflection or two before turning to Reid's expression theory.

1. Beauty, Reid holds, is properly attributable to the experienced object and not the experiencing subject. He bases this contention on the likeness beauty bears to secondary qualities, and inasmuch as a secondary quality is a quality at all it can legitimately be attributed to the object which possesses it. All we need beware of is to be clear that the quality thus attributed is construed as the causal power within the object, and not to confuse the quality with the sensation which this power produces in us. To deny that bodies possess such powers would give rise to the sorts of absurdity that inevitably accompany the denial of one or more principles of commonsense.

2. Reid leaves ample room to account for the errors of the subjectivistic school of thought, for, given our tendency to dwell on our sensations in those special instances, it is quite natural to find theoretical primacy being attributed to the sensational aspect of aesthetic experience, at the expense of its objective source. Hume, after all, does affirm that there exists such an objective source within our aesthetic experience. And yet, since this affirmation does occur *in the same sentence* in which beauty is said to inhere in the apprehending subject *more so* even than sweet and bitter, its theoretical import is reduced to a whisper. Reid's intent seems to be to put our sensations back in their proper place in the perceptual process, and not to aggrandize them to excess.

3. The absence of intersensory modes of verification in the case of secondary qualities, and accordingly, of beauty, implies that, while there may be blind astronomers, there will be no blind art critics (some of them only seem that way). Beauties of the eye do not *translate into* beauties of the ear, or of touch, though there may well

be objects which possess beauties that appeal to more than just one sense (Brancusi's sculpture, for example, is generally pleasing to the eye and inviting to the touch).

2.3 *Expression Theory*

In view of the developments that were to occur through the nineteenth century in both artistic practice and aesthetic theory, it is undoubtedly the expression theory of beauty which constitutes Reid's most salient contribution to the field. He offers a thumbnail sketch of the theory in his discussion of the first principles of taste and develops it at greater length in his chapters on grandeur and beauty in the "Essay on Taste."¹⁹ Anticipations of it are to be found, as well, in his *Inquiry*, written much earlier.

Several components are necessary to the fulfillment of an act of expression. First, there must be some physical or bodily manifestation which can and must be grasped through one or more of our senses. Secondly, there must be an individual consciousness, a mind, which actually experiences such physical manifestations. Thirdly, there must be a system of signs enabling the experiencing consciousness not merely to apprehend certain physical configurations, but to understand that these configurations signify something and to be moved by them (agreeably, in the case of something beautiful). And fourthly, there is that of which these external signs bear testimony—a mind or spirit which is qualified by certain attitudes or states. Let us focus on each of these elements individually, although it is clear that they all are so inextricably interwoven in the actual process of

¹⁹ Another chapter in the essay dealing with novelty deserves little of our attention simply because, as Reid himself puts it, "novelty . . . is no quality of the new object, but merely a relation which it has to the knowledge of the person to whom it is new. Therefore, . . . every quality in an object that pleases a good taste, must, in one degree or another, have either grandeur or beauty" (I, 502). Since novelty is assigned a position of relative unimportance, then, it is of little consequence that Reid misinterprets the notion in making it strictly a relationship between the object and the knower. Clearly, within the aesthetic domain especially, novelty is more importantly a relationship between a work of art and the tradition within which it occurs. A technique loses its novelty and might well be termed "hackneyed" if it is one which has been employed numerous times, by the same artist or by different artists, prior to a particular instance of its use, regardless of whether or not this latter instance should constitute *my* initial exposure to it.

expression that no one can be treated without involving some or all of the others.

1. Regarding the material manifestation which our senses apprehend, this aspect of beauty turns out, on Reid's analysis, to be aesthetically neutral. A statue, a tree, a person all function as no more than significant conduits, bearers of signs which indicate the workings of a consciousness. These signs and the consciousness they reveal, in a manner of speaking, swallow the material object whole. "When we consider matter as an inert, extended, divisible, and movable substance, there seems to be nothing in these qualities which we can call grand" (or beautiful) (I, 498). But when such matter is shaped or activated by spiritual forces it becomes capable of being deemed beautiful (or grand, or even ugly). Therefore, in Reid's initial explanation to the effect that we pronounce objects grand or beautiful in virtue of "their having some perfection or excellence belonging to them" (I, 498), this perfection or excellence turns out to be not at all inherent in the object *qua* material object; it dwells there only insofar as the object is capable of communicating to us something of a spiritual perfection or excellence.

2. This "spiritual interior" deserves our close consideration. It is clear that where human beings are concerned Reid intends to refer to what we would call mind or soul, for on his account that is the active, immaterial aspect of our being; and he speaks of moral and intellectual excellence in most instances as if they amounted to roughly the same thing. Certain of his examples, however, do suggest that there are intellectual virtues separate from moral ones, as when, in discussing rational beauty, he speaks of a well constructed machine: "all its parts . . . made of the fittest materials, and of the most proper form; nothing superfluous, nothing deficient" (I, 501). Such a machine he allows to be termed beautiful, but it clearly would have only a contingent link, at best, to any moral matters. By far the greater number of his examples, however, focus on moral virtues, moral perfections, conveying a sense that the general drift of his thinking would place the intellect in service to morality.

The moral qualities of an individual are attributable to that person's mind, and the qualities whose manifestation we find beautiful include "innocence, gentleness, condescension, humanity, natural affection, public spirit, and the whole train of the soft and gentle virtues" (I, 502). Such attributes as these "are the natural

objects of love and kind affection" (I, 502); and it is these emotions which Reid associates with beauty. Others, those which produce admiration, are deemed grand rather than beautiful; these include "magnanimity, fortitude, self-command, superiority to pain and labor, superiority to pleasure, and to the smiles of Fortune as well as to her frowns" (I, 502). Naturally, it is only through the deeds of others that we come to be acquainted with such virtues, as well as their correlate vices: magnanimity is nothing apart from magnanimous *acts*; public spirit requires a *display* of public spiritedness, and so on. Still, we do not look admiringly or lovingly upon the deeds in and of themselves; it is only because we immediately infer that they originate in the consciousness of a person that we find them beautiful or grand. A mere material object such as a dike, after all, may prevent a town from being flooded, but of itself it contains no moral virtue, hence no beauty; the boy who puts his finger in it to stop up a leak, and who does so at considerable personal risk, accomplishes the same purpose as the dam, but he is praiseworthy—we will admire him and call him and his actions grand. Even those beauties we are prone to find in human beings that seem to be of a more physical nature, such as "health, strength, agility" (I, 503), contribute to a person's beauty, according to Reid, only insofar as "they increase his power, and render the body a fit instrument for the mind."

Works of art constitute just one area, albeit a very prominent and concentrated one, in which the spiritual power of man manifests itself. A work of art, like a person, can be beautiful or grand (or ugly or niggling), and it will be so in proportion to the elevatedness of the values expressed through it. Obviously no work of art in any straightforward sense possess a soul. Yet they are created by human beings, and what beauty they have derives from the extent to which they express the virtues which their creator intended them to express. In Reid's own words, "works of art express some quality of the artist . . ." (I, 453), and again "that beauty is greatest when the arrangement gives the most distinct, the most natural, and the most agreeable image of that which the painter intended to represent" (I, 504). The very qualities of unity and variety, so commonly cited as those which any beautiful work will possess, are themselves interpreted as being suggestive of the creative mentality of the artists, for "where regularity is joined with variety, it expresses design more

strongly" (I, 505), and design itself indicates the controlling influence of mind.

Animate nature, on Reid's account, is capable of being beautiful in either of two ways. It is undeniable that certain of the higher creatures display a measure of intelligence. Though incapable of rational thought and volition, they nevertheless behave in ways that suggest a certain sagacity, indeed it is not beyond them to act more resourcefully on occasion than we ourselves would, in spite of our highly developed intellectual powers (or sometimes, it seems, *because* of our highly developed intellectual powers). To the extent that their activity reveals intelligence, however marginal, there is the possibility that we will find ourselves moved to calling them beautiful. (This again, let us note, suggests a separateness of intellect and morality, since animals, lacking powers of volition, are incapable of moral behavior.)

There is no clear point of demarcation between these traces of intelligence, however faint, and simple instinct, or the brute organic responses of the sort most plainly in evidence in the vegetable kingdom, where leaves turn toward the sun, trees stretch to top their neighbors, and roots probe the earth in search of moisture. Surely, however, the greater part of animal behavior, even among the higher species—and let us not, for that matter, forget the involuntary functions which sustain human life—are automatic. Should we find beauty in any such phenomena, the mentality which lies behind them belongs not to the creatures themselves, but to their creator. It is God, Reid holds, who fashioned his creatures in such a wise way, and it is his wisdom which shines through their actions, movements, and appearance.

In this same manner, inanimate nature is also capable of being beautiful. Dead matter viewed in isolation, as we have seen, offers nothing that invites us to call it beautiful, "but when we contemplate the globe which we inhabit, as fitted by its form, by its motions, and by its furniture, for the habitation and support of an infinity of various orders of living creatures, from the lowest reptile up to man, we have a glorious spectacle indeed" (I, 503).

To underscore the importance of the distinction between the object toward which the attribution of beauty is directed, and its spiritual interior, from which its claim to beauty actually springs, Reid finds it worthwhile to introduce a technical refinement. He

suggests that the interior beauty—mind and its moral attributes—should be termed “original beauty,” while the beauty which actually is perceived by us should be called “derived beauty” (I, 501-02). The grounds of this distinction have been laid in the foregoing, in Reid’s observations concerning the aesthetic nature of mere matter and his contention that only when such matter is inspired or acted upon by mind is it capable of being seen to be beautiful.

Actually the distinction is an interesting one, and it deserves our close attention for the light it sheds on Reid’s methodological commitments, especially on the role which ordinary language plays in the confirmation and disconfirmation of philosophical positions. If one reads the essay on taste somewhat rapidly and draws generalizations with similar haste he can well come away with the feeling that Reid tries to work both sides of the ordinary language street. Quite simply, when arguing that beauty is properly attributed to the beautiful object, he appears to be enlisting the testimony of ordinary language in support of his position, in observing that “the common judgment of mankind in this matter sufficiently appears in the language of all nations, which uniformly ascribes excellence, grandeur, and beauty to the object, and not to the mind that perceives it. And I believe in this, as in most other things, we shall find the common judgment of mankind and true philosophy not to be at variance” (I, 495). But soon thereafter he casts a suspicious glance at the reliability of ordinary language, in judging that “there is nothing more common in the sentiments of all mankind, and in the language of all nations, than what may be called a communication of attributes” (I, 501), and such a communication of attributes, it turns out, leads the common man to ascribe beauty to the object and not, *as philosophical propriety would dictate*, to the state of mind lying behind and expressing itself through the object. Just what is Reid up to here?

This very question has been raised before,²⁰ and if it is not answered properly Reid comes away looking almost stupid—offering an argument and its contrary within a page or two of each other (normally we only allow Locke to get away with that). It is worth taking a brief detour, then, in order to examine the nature and

²⁰ See, for example, David Robbins, “The Aesthetics of Thomas Reid,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 5, (Spring 1942): 37-38.

strength of Reid's appeals to ordinary language. More than just the present thesis hangs in the balance, for allusions to the common man—"the vulgar"—and the language he speaks can be found throughout Reid's writings. He is invariably sympathetic toward the common man, and frequently enough he finds his intuitions, as embedded in ordinary discourse, to stand closer to the truth than do the often convoluted systems of philosophers. This might create the impression that he is something of an ordinary language philosopher, comparable to such recent thinkers as Wittgenstein, Austin and their followers.²¹ This impression is a mistaken one, however. Let us see why, then turn our observations back to the aesthetic issue at hand.

For one thing, in ordinary language philosophy, ordinary discourse is treated as definitive, as the only possible criterion of truth. Philosophy which fails to conform to the dictates of ordinary language is represented as somehow bewitched; philosophical problems arise, in Wittgenstein's famous dictum, when language "goes on holiday." Ordinary language is viewed as the ultimate arbiter before which all philosophical theories are brought to judgment. This sense of ultimacy is lacking in Reid's treatment of common discourse. A close look at the first of the above quotations—that which accepts the support provided by ordinary language (let us call this "Thesis A")—shows Reid saying "I believe in this, *as in most other things*, we shall find the common judgment of mankind *and true philosophy* not to be at variance" (I, 495). That this accord only exists in "most other things" indicates something less than the universal correspondence ordinary language philosophy would require. That "true philosophy" is conjoined to and thus set apart from common judgment shows that it is not to be thought of as collapsing into it.

The second of our above quotations—that which raises doubts as to the philosophical adequacy of ordinary language (let us call this "Thesis B")—is not at all isolated and eccentric within Reid's works, for there are many instances in which the language of the common man is judged to be ambiguous or misleading. And this could hardly occur if Reid took ordinary language to be the criterion of truth. Sometimes ordinary language is misleading because it unwittingly

²¹ See, for example, Henning Jensen, "Common Sense and Common Language in Thomas Reid's Ethical Theory," *The Monist* 61 (April 1978): 299-310.

falls victim to misleading analogies—the materialization of mental attributes (*grasping* truths, *weighing* alternatives, etc.) is probably the principal example of this flaw (I, 236-38). Sometimes the demands of everyday life simply do not require philosophical precision. Such is the case where the absolute ground of our attribution of beauty is concerned, for beauty is rarely a life or death concern, hence (Thesis B) we might well err as to its source. The same is true with regard to the question of secondary qualities, where ordinary discourse shows a tendency to confuse effect with cause and refer to the sensation as if it were the quality, a confusion which the philosopher, according to Reid, has every right to dispel. The philosopher need only make it clear that his aims are different from those of the common man, and that therefore he is not *correcting* defects of speech of the latter: disclosure of the hidden source and the causal factors involved in certain of our attributions would no more *invalidate* the common man's ways of speaking than would a physicist's account of the atomic structure of a table—which has it that tiny bits of matter called nuclei and electrons gyre and gimmel about in what is otherwise Empty Space—invalidate the everyday characterization of the table as “solid.”

Almost invariably, when Reid makes an appeal to ordinary discourse it is either to lend further substantiation to a claim which he takes to have been already confirmed, or to arouse or deepen suspicion toward a philosophical position he is criticizing. At practically no time throughout Reid's writings, in other words, does conformity (or disconformity) to ordinary language even seem to be offered as a sufficient condition for the acceptance (or rejection) of a philosophical thesis. The objectivity of beauty is no exception to this, for surely Thesis A is only one among many reasons that are cited as justifying the attribution of beauty to the object.

What, in Reid's estimate, does constitute such a sufficient condition? It is commonsense and its first principles which constitute the ultimate criteria of philosophical adequacy. When language mirrors commonsense, as it frequently does, then it is legitimate and wise to appeal to it for whatever insight it might provide concerning these basic principles. As Reid puts it “language is the express image and picture of human thoughts; and from the picture we may often draw very certain conclusions with regard to the original” (I, 233). One of the most telling pictures offered by language, he felt, was the

syntactic feature—present, as he often says, in all languages—of the subject-predicate form of assertion. The universal occurrence of this form constituted, to his way of thinking, overwhelming evidence as to the rightness of a substance-attribute conception of reality (hence of the wrongness of Berkeley's attempt to argue away the notion of material substance). As the word "often" indicates in the above quotation, however, the connections between thought and language, however strong, nevertheless remain contingent. It is also worth noting in this passage that it is the ability of language to reflect *thought* which renders it valuable. There is thus, on Reid's view, something more ultimate than language which stands as the proper object of inquiry; in addition, this something is only reflected by language, it is not constituted by it.

Our language is most likely to reflect commonsense principles where the dictates of everyday life—about which our system of communication has grown—require us to defer to these principles. If, for example we went about systematically distrusting our faculties, or doubting that the future will resemble the past or that events in the world are causally interrelated, mankind would surely have extinguished itself long ago. And where would that leave ordinary language?

The attribution of beauty to the object (the point associated with Thesis A) is linked in one way or another to several first principles, mentioned already in connection with secondary qualities: "that the qualities which we perceive by our senses must have a subject, which we call body;" that "whatever exists must have a cause which produces it;" "that those things do really exist which we distinctly perceive by our senses, and are what we perceive them to be;" "that the natural faculties, by which we distinguish truth from error, are not fallacious." And these principles appear to be so basic to our mere survival that it is no wonder ordinary discourse stands in accordance with them.

On the other hand, once Reid makes the observation that we do in fact find things beautiful to the extent that they reflect a moral or intellectual character his distinction between original and derived beauty can be seen to be based on two other principles. One is the sixth of the first principles of contingent truths, which holds "that we have some degree of power over our actions and the determination of our will" (I, 446). It is on this principle that moral responsibility

is based, for “to call to account a being who never was invested with any degree of power, is an absurdity no less than it would be to call to account an inanimate being. We are sure, therefore, if we have any account to make to the author of our being, that we must have some degree of power” (I, 446). The entire domain of human beauty, then, submits to this principle, as do works of art which, after all, were it not for the soul of the artist shining through them, would indeed be mere inanimate things. The origin of the beauty found throughout nature (and man too is, in important respects, part of nature) is grounded in the third of Reid’s principles of metaphysical truths: “That design and intelligence in the cause may be inferred, with certainty, from marks or signs of it in the effect” (I, 457). The spectacle of nature is replete with such signs, and in the case of nature the intelligence in question can only be the Supreme Intelligence. In short, then, faithfulness to the dictates of the principles of commonsense shows itself here as in many other instances in Reid’s works to be his ultimate commitment; ordinary language (as Thesis B holds) tends to obscure the truths in the case of the genuine source of beauty, as it does in various other instances, as well. Thus the contradiction which provoked this discussion turns out to be merely apparent, not real. In brief, Reid appeals to ordinary language not to substantiate a point but to enhance a point whose definitive justification lies elsewhere (in the first principles of commonsense). And where it happens that ordinary language obscures our view of certain first principles, he has no qualms about laying the blame upon ordinary language.

3. Following mind and matter, the third necessary component of expression is a consciousness, distinct from the other two elements, to grasp the beautiful spectacle and be moved by it. We possess, according to Reid, an immediate consciousness of our own acts of mind which is different in kind from the awareness we can attain of any acts of mind originating outside ourselves. Yet even this self consciousness does not put us directly in touch with our own minds in the manner in which we are in direct contact with the physical environment, and as a result, we cannot ourselves experience whatever beauty we might possess and express. Beauty is properly apprehended through the perception and immediate interpretation of certain signs, but self consciousness involves no such signs; conse-

quently, it is only the beauty of *other* selves which we can experience.

4. Such signs constitute the fourth necessary element in expression. Reid believed that there is a system of natural signs through which internal states—states of mind—are represented to our external senses. This seemed to him so obvious that he fashioned a first principle after it—the ninth among the principles of contingent truths: “That certain features of the countenance, sounds of the voice, and gestures of the body, indicate certain thoughts and dispositions of mind” (I, 449). Surely much if not most of the language we speak designates not naturally but arbitrarily, by convention; but then, much if not most of what we say is not expressive, either: “Artificial signs signify, but they do not express” (I, 117). Language is learned; expressive behavior comes naturally. And Reid points out, “if mankind had not a natural language, they could never have invented an artificial one by their reason and ingenuity” (I, 117). In more formidable terms, natural language is seen here as a transcendental condition for the possibility of the language we do actually speak.

Reid finds evidence of man’s ability to comprehend expressive signs in the responses of children too young to have learned them, and in peoples of such different backgrounds that none could be thought to have acquired any such knowledge from the others. “Those who give attention to the operations of children, can easily discover the time when they have their earliest notices from experience—such as that flame will burn, or that knives will cut. But no man is able to recollect in himself, or to observe in others, the time when the expression of the face, voice, and gesture, were learned” (I, 449). In pantomime, an art practiced in many cultures through the ages, Reid sees just such signs being put to use in conveying whole stories, and he remarks that “although it required much study and practice in the pantomimes to excel in their art, yet it required neither study nor practice in the spectators to understand them” (I, 450).

From Reid’s *Inquiry* comes the following remarkable and provocative contention:

It were easy to show that the fine arts of the musician, the painter, the actor, and the orator, so far as they are expressive . . . yet they are nothing else but the language of nature, which we brought into the world with us, but have unlearned by disuse, and so find the greatest

difficulty in recovering it. Abolish the use of articulate sounds and writing among mankind for a century, and every man would be a painter, an actor, and an orator. (I, 118-19)

The beauties we perceive in our fellow man and in the works of art which they have produced come to us, therefore, by way of this language of natural signs, which provides us with the only glimpse we can possibly have of those moral beauties which lie within. The principle which governs natural beauty has already been cited above: "That design and intelligence in the cause may be inferred, with certainty, from marks or signs of it in the effect." Nature thereby conveys to us a sense of God's wisdom, and of his goodness in having provided for us in such a fashion. Remove from any natural scene the notion that the face of nature speaks to us of such a spiritual interior, and all beauty will vanish and be replaced by silent streams, dumb trees, and creatures that motor about devoid of sense and purpose.

Let us now observe the alterations and developments which Reid's philosophy, in particular his aesthetics, received at the hands of three succeeding generations of thinkers in France. With Cousin we shall be principally concerned with remarking how (and what) metaphysical strains are woven into Reid's basic doctrine. With Jouffroy we will observe how the theory is enriched through the very "Scottish" technique of introspective psychological analysis. Then we will follow it through a myriad of reformulations, culminating in the dramatic overhaul of the entire expressionist approach in the hands of Sully-Prudhomme.

CHAPTER TWO

VICTOR COUSIN

Victor Cousin is probably the most important figure in French philosophy of the nineteenth century. He founded a school of philosophy and effected its wide dissemination; rekindled a respect for the philosophy of ancient times and the middle ages; promoted the study of recent and contemporary German philosophers from Kant through Hegel; and set standards for exegetical thoroughness in his many translations and editions that subsequent generations can only strive to equal.

That Cousin came by an education at all was apparently the result of one of life's bizarre contingencies. The story has it that one day, as a youth, he sprang to the defense of another boy who was being tormented in the streets by a band of bullies. Out of gratitude for such a spontaneous and noble act, the boy's parents insisted on paying Cousin's way through school. By 1815, some years and an armful of academic awards later, Cousin found himself, at the ripe age of 23, lecturing in philosophy at the Ecole normale. A spellbinding orator, he rapidly achieved a large audience for his philosophical views and preferences. After only five years of teaching, however, he was officially silenced, as the political situation tightened and his views were judged to be too liberal for public consumption. But when Cousin was restored to his chair eight years later (in 1828), during a brief period of political detente while Martignac headed Charles X's cabinet, there erupted a great flurry of excitement in the Latin quarter and beyond. Each lecture was eagerly awaited, and immediately upon its delivery a transcription would be whisked off, printed and dispatched throughout France. Philosophy had been awakened from its *sommeil dogmatique*; and it was all Cousin's doing.

As a professor, Cousin's philosophical doctrine, combined with his personal charisma, enabled him to develop a considerable following over the years. As Director of Public Instruction, a position he held for a number of years until political matters—this time the revolution of 1848—once again caused him to step down, he was well situated to place select individuals in key positions

throughout the country (as well as to keep representatives of "repellant" philosophical views, such as Auguste Comte, out of such positions). As a result, the character of the philosophical education one received in France bore his imprint directly for at least a generation, and indirectly for longer yet.

The philosophy Cousin promulgated, while it contained doctrinal elements, was characterized rather in terms of its method. "Eclecticism" is the name he gave to it, and it embodied the conviction that all philosophical systems contain something of the truth, commingled with certain false elements. The true philosophy would be the one which gathered the truths attained by various systems throughout the ages, and pared away from them whatever false beliefs they had been associated with. I shall say more about eclecticism shortly; for the moment let us just note that the very nature of the doctrine draws its adherents into a consideration of the whole history of philosophy. It is not a system of beliefs which could be reached through reflections carried out in isolation, for how, under such circumstances, would one come to know what truths had been unearthed by previous philosophers? Eclecticism thus required a serious critical examination of the results attained by philosophers across the centuries.

When French philosophy had been brought to a crossroads two centuries earlier by Descartes, it was done so in quite the opposite spirit: the teachings of the elders were to be distrusted generally, systematically, in order that a new foundation might be laid, upon which an individual thinker—one such as Descartes—could profitably build, outfitted with but a few rules to direct his mind. It is a telling point of contrast that while Descartes boasted of the scantiness of his own library, Cousin was a bibliophile extraordinaire.

Closer to Cousin's time, Cabanis and Destutt de Tracy—the *Idéologues*—showed likewise a Cartesian disdain for historical studies, and they had been in the ascendancy for quite some time. They believed themselves in possession of an empirical method for the study and interpretation of phenomena, both internal and external, which rendered obsolete all previous explorations into these areas. And why bother to study that which is obsolete? Thus France's greatest philosopher and its latest philosophy either counseled or practiced a certain indifference to the history of philosophy. Cousin, on the other hand, brought forward translations of Plato and Proclus, collected and edited the works of Descartes,

Pascal, Abelard and Maine de Biran, and translated Tennemann's *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*.¹ The exceptional philosophical scholarship which has come to be practiced in France has Cousin as its point of origin and chief inspiration.

At the start of the nineteenth century, the only German philosopher who enjoyed any reputation in France was Leibniz, most likely because so many of his major writings were in French. In 1801, Charles de Villers' *Philosophie de Kant* was published, but it caused little stir.² Some fifteen years later it was Mme de Staël who sang praise of German literature and culture, and this time Victor Cousin picked up the tune. His interest piqued, he set out in 1817 on the first of several "philosophical pilgrimages" he was to make into Germany, to meet and exchange ideas with many—indeed most—of the leading philosophical figures there. He returned to his homeland, if not with a solid grasp of their ideas, at least with the enthusiastic desire that they be heard out; and Cousin's enthusiasms were invariably contagious. In the end he became well acquainted with Schelling and formed a firm friendship with Hegel which endured, except for one brief hiatus, until Hegel's death. In fact in 1824, on one of his philosophical excursions, Cousin was incarcerated for several months by the German government (French liberals were somewhat suspect, apparently), and Hegel energetically helped to secure his release. And when Hegel visited Paris in 1827 it was Cousin who hosted him and saw to it that he had ample exposure to the French gastronomic art.³ Although Cousin's own philosophy shows only the faintest and briefest influence of absolute idealism (a point I will argue in detail in Part 2 of this chapter), he nevertheless played a vital role in extending the French philosophical consciousness laterally, across the Rhine. And for better or for worse, philosophy in France has never been the same since.

Cousin's own philosophical views continued to attract attention even after his death in 1865. The version of *Du vrai, du beau et du*

¹ Translated as *Manual de l'histoire de philosophie*, 2 vols. (Paris: Librairie de Ladrangé, 1839).

² Charles de Villers, *Philosophie de Kant, ou Principes fondamentaux de la philosophie transcendente* (Metz: Collignon, 1801).

³ For an interesting look at Cousin's relationship with Hegel see: Paul Janet, *Victor Cousin et son oeuvre* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1893), Chap. IX.

bien which he brought out in 1853,⁴ tidying and tinkering with it over the next several years, went through eighteen more printings until the final one in 1881. By then other philosophical trends such as (alas) positivism and—ironically—Hegelianism were shouldering him aside, while the introspective psychology of the Scottish school to which he subscribed had been called into question and psychophysiology was quite on the rise. With the recent renewal of interest in Thomas Reid, however, it is thoroughly appropriate that there be a similar renewal of interest in Victor Cousin's philosophy, as well.

My analysis in this chapter falls into three parts. A detailed examination of Cousin's aesthetics constitutes the ultimate goal, and this is carried out in Part 3. In order to reach a full understanding of this aspect of his thinking, however, some preparatory consideration must be pursued. For one thing, as the title of Cousin's major work suggests, beauty was seen by him as part of a larger package in which truth and goodness were also essential constituents. Therefore, Cousin's aesthetics, just as Reid's, needs to be integrated into his overall philosophical enterprise. A second point, the substance of which is closely interwoven with the first, has to do with establishing a perspective from which to interpret Cousin's philosophy—determining, that is, just what philosophies worked their way into Cousin's system.

Failure to establish a proper perspective, or—what amounts to the same thing—the interpretation of Cousin's, or any, philosophy from an illegitimate perspective can produce quite undesirable results. George Boas, for example, whose *French Philosophies of the Romantic Period* has long been regarded as a reliable commentary on this era in philosophy, approaches Cousin as if he were some sort of an absolute idealist.⁵ But since Boas himself was of that persuasion, and since he appears never to have read any Reid—or at best, to have glanced at it through Hegelian eyes—he finds Cousin's "version" of absolute idealism to be eccentric and of little value. This is hardly surprising, though, since as I will show, it is in fact no version of it at all.

⁴ Victor Cousin, *Du vrai, du beau et du bien* (Paris: Didier, 1853).

⁵ George Boas, *French Philosophies of the Romantic Period* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1925).

Part 1 is devoted to highlighting the influence of Reid on the formation of Cousin's ideas, especially in the metaphilosophical and epistemological domain, but not exclusively so—such topics as space, time, and free will, where this influence is equally prominent, are normally treated as metaphysical issues. In Part 2, I argue that the role played by the absolute idealism of either Schelling or Hegel in the shaping of Cousin's thought should be downplayed practically to nothing; instead, I contend that the formulation of his metaphysics owes its greatest debt to another German philosopher: Leibniz. To demonstrate this, I pursue the question of what significance the concept of the absolute has in Cousin's philosophy, and conclude that he employed that notion in the manner in which Leibniz did, and not at all as Schelling or Hegel did.

Having Reid and Leibniz as one's principal philosophical influences is not as peculiar as it might at first sound. Reid and Hume would be strange, Locke and Leibniz a bit bizarre, but Reid and Leibniz almost complement one another. Reid does speak of the self or the soul as a *monad*, but only for the sake of emphasizing its simplicity and indivisibility; Leibniz, of course, packs much more into the term. Reid spurns the use of hypotheses in philosophical explanation which lose touch with the facts of experience, but Leibniz's hypotheses about metaphysical reality are so overbold that instead of piquing Reid's critical fervor (as do, for example, those of Hume concerning the self as a bundle of perceptions, or the world as only knowable indirectly through our ideas), they seem more to daze him to the point of bemusement. But in the end, it is fair to say that the two do share profoundly theistic conceptions of reality. If Cousin were to adopt and adapt their respective views concerning the nature of human experience—the one a commonsense realist, the other a proto-idealist—a monstrous synthesis would surely result. But by adhering to Reid's position in metaphilosophy and epistemology, Cousin need only ignore his metaphysical agnosticism to make ample room for Leibniz. Likewise, no more than Reid did Cousin wish to involve himself in the hypothetical eccentricities of the monadology; it is principally Leibniz's concept of the absolute, or God, which he is concerned to adopt, in order to supply an ontological ground for the a priori elements of the human intellect.

1. *Epistemology and Metaphysics: Reid's Influence*

On the question of his own philosophical indebtedness, Cousin was rarely forthcoming and straightforward; indeed, his occasional remarks on that topic seem designed to obscure or conceal more than to reveal. At one time, for example, he cited as his three philosophical masters Royer-Collard, Maine de Biran and Laromiguière. In so doing, however, either he had it in mind to aggrandize the French origins of his thinking by omitting references to any non-French influences, or he was making reference to the individuals, to the *men*, who instilled in him a love for both doing and teaching philosophy, rather than to the ideas that they instilled. Royer-Collard, of course, does deserve credit, for it was he who was responsible for introducing Cousin to Reid's philosophy; Maine de Biran, while an important philosopher of the time, left little imprint on any of Cousin's own work; Laromiguière was a spokesman—apparently an eloquent one—for the sensationalism which Condillac championed and Cabanis and Destutt de Tracy continued to develop, but this very doctrine was anathema to Cousin throughout his entire philosophical career.

In his celebrated course of 1828, Cousin nowhere mentions Reid by name and refers to the Scottish school as “an honorable protestation . . . against the extravagances of the ultimate consequences of sensualism [which thereby] may justly claim the esteem of all good men. . . . But it advanced no further on its new route than Locke had gone on his.”⁶ And these are the *good* things he has to say about Scottish philosophy there. In the same vein, in the revised version of *Du vrai, du beau et du bien* he asserts “The Scottish school combats Locke and Condillac: it combats them, but with their own arms, with the same method which it claims to apply better,”⁷ thus treating Scottish philosophy as if it exhausted its worth in introspective psychological analysis. When he does wish to eulogize the Scottish

⁶ Victor Cousin, *Cours de philosophie* (Paris: Pinchon & Didier, 1828), leçon XII, 36-37. All subsequent references to this work will appear in the text, referring to it as CP, then specifying the lesson in Roman numerals followed by the page number(s); thus: (CP; XII, 36-37).

⁷ Victor Cousin, *Du vrai, du beau et du bien* (Paris: Didier & Cie, 1878), 7. Subsequently, I refer to this work simply as *Du vrai*.

school, in this work and elsewhere, Cousin will generally aim his praise at Royer-Collard, rather than Reid.

There is nevertheless a certain measure of approach mixed in with all this avoidance. From *Du vrai* again, Cousin alleges "Kant has established, as did Reid and ourself, the existence of universal and necessary principles,"⁸ and in another instance he refers to Reid as the "most irreproachable" philosopher. Directly to the point of our present enterprise, we find him congratulating his own aesthetic theory by remarking—with all the ingenuous surprise of a father who has just helped his two-year-old "discover" one of the Easter eggs he himself hid a couple hours earlier—"We are fortunate in finding this theory, which is so dear to us, confirmed by the authority of one of the severest and most circumspect minds: it may be seen in Reid, 1st Series, vol. iv, lecture 23."⁹

The publicizing which, as we have had occasion to note, Cousin carried out on behalf of contemporary German philosophy darkened matters even more, since it appears that publicity was taken to imply advocacy; Cousin was indeed making use of some concept of the absolute, and who in France at that time was in a position to make a sound determination as to just whose absolute it was? Boas, whom I mentioned in this regard a few pages earlier, was really only buying into an interpretation that had been extant for quite some time (though he should have been more careful).¹⁰ As a consequence of this idealist reading of Cousin's thought, he was reviled for a considerable number of years by the Jesuits and their supporters as a pantheist (an epithet which surely carried more sting in the early

⁸ Ibid., 55-56.

⁹ Ibid., 149.

¹⁰ To give further indication of how widespread this interpretation was, one finds Leo Tolstoy, in his *What is Art?* (Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1960), (first published in 1893), reviewing various aesthetic theories of his century and judging "Cousin was an eclectic and a follower of the German idealists." What is more, he remarks "after Cousin came Jouffroy who was a pupil of Cousin and also a follower of the German aestheticians." (35, both quotations). What is false of Cousin, as we shall see, is *really* false of Jouffroy. But then even Tolstoy himself was relying on yet another text, Knight's *Philosophy of the Beautiful*.

nineteenth century than it does now.)¹¹ Even a thinker as astute as William Hamilton interpreted Cousin's writings in this fashion, as he judges that "the development of his [Cousin's] system, in all its points, betrays the influence of German speculation in his opinions,"¹² and speaks of Cousin as "a disciple, though by no means a servile [one]" of Schelling, referring to the latter shortly after as Cousin's "master."¹³

It appears that for a time Cousin enjoyed these allegations, due undoubtedly, to the *enfant terrible* status they conferred upon him. The delicate balance of academic, national and ecclesiastical politics, however, turned against him on more than one occasion, as we have noted, and this led him later on in his career to "refine out" whatever elements of his thinking might have given the impression of being "suspect." The later edition of *Du vrai* is taken to be such an effort.¹⁴

Amidst this thicket of affirmations and allegations, denials and denunciations, our only real guidance can come from the texts, so let us turn to them in order to learn, not even what Cousin had to say about his own philosophy, but what Cousin's philosophy has to say about itself.¹⁵

¹¹ Principal among his detractors can be counted: l'évêque de Chartres, l'évêque de Belley, l'abbé des Garets. An interesting, if slanted, account of the conflict between the Jesuits and the university during the period of Cousin's directorship can be found in Henry de Riancey's *Histoire de l'instruction publique et de la liberté de l'enseignement en France*, vol. 2 (Paris: Sagnier et Bray, 1844), 427-52.

¹² Sir William Hamilton, "Philosophy of the Unconditioned," in *Discussions on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1856), 15. He does immediately observe, we should note, that "the peculiarity of his doctrine consists in the attempt to combine the philosophy of experience and the philosophy of pure reason into one." By "philosophy of experience" he is likely referring to Reid's philosophical approach. This essay, we should also note, first appeared in 1829.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁴ Janet locates the initiation of this trend earlier, in 1842, in the preface to Cousin's edition of Pascal. *Victor Cousin et son oeuvre*, 384.

¹⁵ Another instance, this a recent one, of allowing others (and what others!) to do one's own interpreting occurs in Alan Spitzer's excellent and informative book, *The French Generation of 1820* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987), where the judgments offered by Hippolyte Taine are permitted to pass as almost literal and emotionless reflections of certain truths about Cousin. Indeed Spitzer at one point remarks "one is tempted to give up writing and just go on quoting Taine"

In this section it is the Reidean character of Cousin's thought which I aim to bring out. Let me begin, however, by observing that the very motto behind eclecticism—that the true philosophy would constitute a synthesis of the truth contained in each philosophy, combined with the rejection of whatever parochially false dimensions every such philosophy would inevitably contain—is in fact a Leibnizean dictum, enunciated by the latter in a letter to Nicolas Remond: "I have found that the great number of systems (*sectes*) are correct concerning a large portion of what they affirm, but less so regarding what they deny."¹⁶ The very idea of achieving an all-encompassing synthesis of a variety of disharmonious philosophical perspectives may also have been suggested to Cousin by a passage from Leibniz's *Nouveaux Essais* (a work with which he was closely acquainted),¹⁷ "I have been struck by a new system [this is Théophile instructing Philalèthe about Leibniz's own system] . . . which appears to ally Plato with Democritus, Aristotle with Descartes, the scholastics with the moderns, theology and moral philosophy with reason. It appears to take the best from all sides and to proceed yet further."¹⁸

While Leibniz provides the model for eclecticism, however, it is Reid who generally supplies the criteria for distinguishing between just what is worth preserving and what is to be rejected in any particular philosophy, as his principles of commonsense unflinchingly guide Cousin's preferences. Such principles, let us remind ourselves, are those judgments which are universal or unavoidable; self-evident or simply evident: judgments, in short, which are both necessary and informative. They neither require nor permit any form of discursive defense, for the judgments themselves carry more epistemic weight

(80). In truth, however, Taine was more a historian, or simply a man of letters, than a philosopher, and to the extent that he did engage in philosophy he attempted to resolve issues simply by burying them under a mountain of facts. If a topic arose which could not be treated in this fashion—and I am tempted to think that this is the case with most genuine philosophical problems—he was powerless to deal with it.

¹⁶ *Die Philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, vol.3 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1965), 607.

¹⁷ He alludes to it in the opening discourse of *Du vrai* (5) as if it constituted Leibniz's magnum opus.

¹⁸ G.W. Leibniz, *Nouveaux essais sur l'entendement humain* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1966), 56.

than any discursive argument would which purported to show that they are false. Close examination of any such argument will reveal either a false premise or an illegitimate inference somewhere.

With the principles of commonsense as his guide, it is not surprising that the “wholesome synthesis” Cousin reaches on various philosophical issues turns out to offer the kind of resolution Reid offers or would have offered. Concerning, for example, the dispute, normally attributed to the rationalists and the empiricists, as to whether there is an a priori element to experience or whether the mind is a blank slate on which experience writes, Cousin recommends synthesizing the truths contained in both approaches in the following manner. Many concepts simply cannot be learned from experience, space being an obvious example since it is a prerequisite for the perception of all objects. Since all objects are perceived in space, space cannot be a product of experience but must be a nativistic input of the intellect itself. On the other hand, the concept of space remains only a potentiality until an object is *experienced* as in space. The object, so to speak, is the stimulating occasion for the functioning of the a priori concept of space.

Two points deserve to be made with respect to this analysis. First, it does not involve a simple blending of the truthful aspects of each approach. Both “experience” and “the a priori element” take on different significances from their usual ones. Experience is not the passive imprinting of sensations upon the mind, but is an active affair. No doubt objects do affect a percipient in a definite manner, but which objects do so is a function of what the agent attends to, and attention is a voluntary act. “Without attention, consequently without voluntary activity, sensations exist unperceived by consciousness; they are as if they were not.”¹⁹ Moreover, attention is crucial at all levels above sensation; for example, “we cannot draw conclusions from an argument without attending to the meaning of the premises—we cannot draw conclusions simply by looking at sentences.”²⁰

¹⁹ Victor Cousin, *The Philosophy of Kant*, tr. A.G. Henderson (London: John Chapman, 1854), 189.

²⁰ Cousin credits Maine de Biran, more so than Reid, for having shaped this facet of his thinking. An interesting subject for future consideration would involve determining the extent to which Biran himself had been influenced by Reid.

Likewise, a priori concepts are taken not as objects of thought known somehow by the mind independent of experience, but as native capacities possessed by the mind, to be called forth in the processing of information forwarded by the senses. The synthesizing of conflicting positions thus involves more than just the separation of true elements from false elements: some retooling of the central concepts seems essential. Secondly, the eclectic synthesis, on close examination, turns out to be nothing other than the account of perception which Reid offered.

Similar results are achieved often enough by Cousin to lead us to question the extent to which his philosophy was truly eclectic. How eclectic is it, after all, if the true portions of this or that system keep showing up in Reid's work? Let us look at a few more examples, starting with the critique which Cousin offers of Kant's rejection of the universal belief of mankind that space is objective and external. "Here," he asserts, "the fact to be explained is the very belief of the human race, and the system of Kant annihilates it," doing so, he alleges, by conceding that such principles as space and time "apply only to the impressions of the sensibility."²¹ Distinguishing between spontaneous reason and reflective reason, Cousin would place the objectivity and externality of space and time among those judgments which issue from spontaneous reason—Reid's nativistic input, evidently—and he goes on to conclude "Instead of saying, as Kant does: principles are necessary, therefore they have no absolute validity external to us; we say: principles have an absolute validity external to us, and that is the reason why we necessarily believe them." Discursive reasoning is seen by Cousin as being powerless likewise to either establish or dismiss the belief that liberty exists.

To ask whether liberty subsists in the world, is to ask whether I, existing in the world, am a free being, gifted with a causality which is peculiarly mine, or whether I only obey an irresistible fatality. Now, how can I answer such a question? Is it by reasoning? No, but by the testimony of consciousness, by the aid of that immediate internal perception which we have of ourselves. I am conscious of possessing

²¹ This and the succeeding quotation are from Cousin's *Elements of Psychology*, tr. C.S. Henry, 4th improved edition (New York: Ivison, Phinney, Blakeman & Co., 1864), 528-31.

a power of resisting, to a certain extent, forces foreign to my own. What are all the arguments in the world in opposition to a fact like this?²²

This testimony which our consciousness provides of our own freedom is the first and foremost of the reasons which Reid offers in opposition to determinism in his *Active Powers*.

Cousin's critique of Locke's account of personal identity similarly follows the lines laid out by Reid. Locke, he claims, "has confounded identity with consciousness and memory."²³ In fact, these latter powers do no more than suggest the idea of identity—they are in no position to reveal it. Not only do memory and consciousness fail to constitute it, but "personal identity itself is not even an object of consciousness and of memory."²⁴ Rather, "the irresistible conviction of my personal existence as one and identical,"²⁵ is another one of the ideas suggested to me by spontaneous reason.

The very theory of ideas as intermediate representations to the mind of some reality beyond the mind is also rejected by Cousin for many of the same reasons that Reid rejected it. It is, of course, Locke who receives the bulk of their attention, and the consequence of their critique is to provide an interpretation of the activity of perceiving which places us in direct relation not to ideas, but to external reality itself. Cousin's conclusion is that "in order to know beings we have no need of an intermediate. We know things directly and without the medium of ideas, or of any other medium. The mind is subject to certain conditions, but when these conditions are once supplied, it enters into exercise, and knows, for the sole reason that it is endowed with the ability of knowing."²⁶

Cousin did make original contributions, as well, to what is generally a Reidean epistemology. His critique of the empiricists' atomic conception of terms is one such contribution. He argues that the empiricists had been misled by grammar into taking individual terms as epistemically basic, from which judgments and propositions

²² Cousin, *Philosophy of Kant*, 114.

²³ Cousin, *Elements*, 160.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 161.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 158.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 277.

would then be generated by some act of the mind or merely by the association of ideas.²⁷ This confusion then led the empiricists to the untenable view that knowledge begins with atomistic, passively received sensory units impressed from without. The truth of the matter, Cousin claimed, is that spontaneous reason is in essence propositional, knitting particular terms together into a seamless whole from the very outset. Distinguishing individual terms then becomes a matter of abstraction and generalization. He held Kant to be equally blameworthy for having uncritically adopted this erroneous conception of judgment.

Cousin has certain other interesting criticisms of Kant to offer, interesting in that they bring a Reidean approach to bear on certain of Kant's claims—something which Reid, having been a predecessor of Kant, could not quite manage. In the antinomies, for example, Cousin alleges that Kant illegitimately infers that reason is equally capable of justifying both the thesis and the antithesis. While this may be so in certain instances, he holds, it is not so in all of them. Thus the first antinomy, which inquires into whether or not the world has had a beginning in time, is indeed a question which remains within the province of reason. But the third antinomy, raising the question of whether liberty exists in the world, is not to be answered by reasoning, as we saw a few pages earlier, but by consulting our own consciousness. The second antinomy, that concerning whether the world contains anything indivisible, should be divided into two separate questions which are in important respects incommensurable. Cousin claims: "first, are *bodies* composed of simple indivisible parts? and secondly, is the soul a simple substance?"²⁸ This latter question again is one which is properly put to the test of consciousness, not reason. Even the question of necessary being is one which is not answered in a straightforwardly rational fashion since, Cousin holds, "as soon as consciousness attests the existence of contingent things . . . then immediately, without the support of any major premises, without passing through any logical process, . . . we conceive a necessary being."²⁹ Clearly, if these observations of his are apposite, Kant's

²⁷ Cousin, *Elements*, 279; and Chap. 8.

²⁸ Cousin, *Philosophy of Kant*, 116.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

voyages into the noumenal realm, where he sought some synthesis for each of these antinomies, would largely be obviated. This result would certainly have been welcomed by Reid, and the arguments likewise would have met with his approval.

On a rich variety of topics, then—space and time, the identity of the self or soul, human freedom, the a priori element in experience, the nature of the mind, and the relation between the mind and external reality—what is called eclecticism in fact bears an unmistakable resemblance to commonsense philosophy.

2. *The Absolute: Leibniz's Influence*

Cousin's treatment of the absolute marks a certain point of departure from commonsense philosophy, although it is one of my aims to show that it is not as marked a departure as is often alleged. In order to provide the fairest assessment of his thinking on this issue, my analysis focuses on two principal works: the transcription of his course *Du vrai, du beau et du bien*, published by one of his students, Adolphe Garnier, in 1836;³⁰ and his famous lectures delivered on his return to public instruction in 1828, published simply as *Cours de philosophie*.

I have chosen to examine these particular works in order best to measure the extent to which Cousin's thinking might have been transformed by his exposure to the absolute idealists. Some months prior to the commencement of his lectures of 1818 (which really began in December of 1817)—in the summer of 1817, to be a bit more precise—Cousin had made the first of his philosophical pilgrimages into Germany.³¹ He did meet with Hegel on this voyage, and was often recommended to visit Schelling as well, but it was not until the next year—after these lectures had been presented, that is—that he finally did come by the opportunity to make Schelling's acquaintance. Surely there is nothing of Hegel in the concept of the

³⁰ The full title reads *Cours de philosophie sur le fondement des idées absolues du vrai, du beau et du bien* (Paris: Librairie Classique et Élémentaire de L. Hachette, 1836).

³¹ Cousin's personal account of this voyage appears under the title "Promenade philosophique en Allemagne," in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 27 (1 Oct. 1857): 534-560.

absolute that Cousin put forward in these lectures, and Paul Janet's sage remark that "based on a few vacation conversations one cannot change the entire course of his thinking and introduce systems which he has not yet assimilated" would not even apply in the case of Schelling, with whom no such conversations had yet transpired.³² The concept of the absolute on which Cousin's course of 1818 leans so heavily must therefore derive from a source other than the absolute idealists. This will become all the more obvious when we examine the contents and implications of this concept.

While it is always somewhat hazardous to draw upon the accounts provided by students' notes, in this case it may be more of a blessing than a detriment, for Cousin was notorious for his tendency to rework, reshape and polish his older writings. Here, though, we have his assurance that the publication was achieved without any supervision on his part. Thus despite the inevitable occasional inaccuracy, I suspect the final product comes as close as anything extant—and closer than anything Cousin himself might have passed on to posterity—to reflecting the actual state of his philosophy in those early years.

No questions as to accuracy can be raised with respect to the transcriptions of Cousin's 1828 lectures which I consider here (though later editions of them were produced which do show some tidying). And as they do contain certain of the passages most commonly seized upon and displayed as being Schellingian in nature, it is essential that we examine them. In so doing, it should become clear that Cousin's notion of the absolute underwent no substantial alteration during the decade between these two courses, hence its later and its earlier versions can reasonably be inferred to derive from the same source—a source which stands quite apart from absolute idealism. Let us begin, then, with Cousin's earlier approach to the absolute.

2.1 *Du vrai, du beau et du bien; 1818*

This approach begins with a close look at the contents of human consciousness. Cousin finds that it consists, at base, of a sense of self (*moi*), and a sense of something lying beyond and independent

³² Janet, *Victor Cousin et son oeuvre*, 54.

of this self, which he terms the non-self (*non-moi*). In addition to these two elements there is a third—a sense of something supreme, something absolute. In pre-reflective consciousness, this last element is but vaguely conceived, both its nature and its necessity eluding any formal grasp, simply because it is not until consciousness becomes reflective that it becomes concerned with the formal comprehension of its constituents. That is largely what reflection involves, after all.

When we do come to reflect on our consciousness—on the manner in which the self relates to and apprehends the non-self—we become aware that certain elements in human knowledge and cognition possess a peculiar character. Alongside the evanescent qualities of this or that particular cognition, we find that there are others possessed of two special attributes: universality and necessity.³³ Among these Cousin mentions the unity of consciousness (VBB, 55), space and time (VBB, 22), and various other “principles or axioms which preside over metaphysics, mathematics, morality, etc., such as these: any phenomenon which commences to exist supposes some cause, a whole is equal to the sum of its parts, reason ought to exercise dominion over the passions . . .” (VBB, 24). These special truths are seen by Cousin to articulate attributes of the absolute.³⁴ In and of themselves, however, they are only absolute ideas; the absolute substance itself which bears these attributes (God), being one step further removed from our direct consciousness and so in some measure hypothetical, requires something more in order to have its being confirmed. This something more, however, cannot take the form of reasoning, for “all demonstration supposes a principle, but in this instance it is the principle itself which stands in need of demonstration. . . . The absolute thus lies beyond the reach of demonstration” (VBB, 125). What access we have to the absolute, then, comes from a special form of observation “a pure and unreflective intelligence” (VBB, 126). This special effort is termed

³³ Cousin, *Cours du vrai* . . . 1818, 113. All subsequent references to this work will be included in the text, referring to the book as VBB, followed by the page number; thus: (VBB, 113).

³⁴ While it is true that space, time, and the unity of consciousness are not, properly speaking, truths, nevertheless, their respective roles in human experience can be articulated, and such articulations would then constitute absolute truths.

by Cousin (borrowing the term from Kant but investing it with his own meaning) "pure apperception." It involves an act of mind in which one "finds oneself face to face with truth, and is there lifted into a region where all subjectivity expires" (VBB, 135).

The paths laid out by empiricism and by Kantianism (the two approaches Cousin examines most closely) both fail, he contends, to account *fully* for the absolute—that is, for its universality *and* its necessity. Empiricism is capable of discovering the universality of absolute ideas, but can never account for their necessity. Kantianism, on the other hand, provides for the necessity of absolute ideas by making them prerequisites of the possibility of experience; but inasmuch as the experience in question is that had by the *individual subject*, any claim to universality must be abandoned (VBB, 24-25). Pure apperception, however, bridges the gaps which afflict both of these theories.

What it seems Cousin is suggesting here is that a pure confrontation with truths of the sort cited earlier immediately (unreflectively, non-discursively) impresses on the knower the irrefragable awareness that such truths can only derive from a source lying beyond not just the individual's own consciousness or rationality, but beyond consciousness and rationality *per se*. Anything less would deprive these truths of either the universality or the necessity (or both) which I apprehend them to possess. This pure apperception, then, "reveals to me the supreme laws which govern both internal and external reality, and . . . transports me into a sphere superior to the two others" (VBB, 135). The necessity that absolute truths be grounded in absolute substance is therefore something which I grasp in the same manner that I come to grasp that an accident supposes a substance or a quality supposes a subject (VBB, 138).

In effect, then, inasmuch as reason "knows it does not constitute the true, the beautiful and the good in apprehending them" (VBB, 70-71), Cousin leaves us with this alternative: either reject any and all absolute ideas as pure illusion—which would be impossible, he believes, since it has been shown that even simple cognition is dependent upon them—or ground them in the only objective source worthy of them—that is to say, in God. That God exists is then as certain as any elementary truth we might discover about ourselves or about nature, and indeed both types of certainty are mutually dependent: "atheism is impossible, for to reject a belief in God it is

necessary to abandon faith in these truths" (VBB, 128). Such is the nature of Cousin's "transcendental deduction" of absolute being.

A contrast with Kant is actually quite interesting here. God, in being, on Cousin's approach, the source of absolute ideas, is the ultimate ground of *truth*. There is thus a strongly epistemological character to Cousin's deduction. Kant, on the other hand, is willing in his epistemology to allow God to remain nothing more than a regulative ideal; it is only in his ethics where he allows himself to make the move which Cousin makes in his epistemology, inferring as he does that God is one of the necessary grounds upon which morality rests.

Having now seen something of the nature of Cousin's early metaphysical thinking, I should like to comment on three aspects of it: how it stands in relation to Leibniz's theory of the absolute, to Reid's views on the divinity, and to pantheism.

1. It should by this point be clear that the absolute which Cousin expanded upon in his lectures of 1818, is simply not Schelling's, and that it belongs more to Plato or Leibniz. In fact given Cousin's tendency to blur his sources, one might suspect it is more Leibnizian than Platonic simply because he makes more frequent reference in this work to Plato! And surely Cousin's notion of the absolute, or God, is likely to overlap more with that of a recent Christian thinker than that of an ancient pagan philosopher. Indeed, we find Cousin affirming in his *Cours* of 1828 that he is there subscribing to "the theory of Plato and of Leibniz, a theory which I myself adopted, and which in earlier times I developed, often and to great lengths, in this very chair" (CP; V, 12). And in his revised version of *Du vrai* he also gives ample acknowledgement to Leibniz's influence.³⁵

The following passages from Leibniz's *Nouveaux Essais* should confirm Cousin's indebtedness to him. Leibniz asserts, "The idea of the absolute is interior to us as that of being itself: these absolutes are nothing other than attributes of God, and it can be said that they are no less the source of our ideas than that God himself is the principle of all beings."³⁶ We also find there the proposal that "*the idea of the absolute* is anterior in the nature of things to *the idea of this or that limit* that we add on to things, but we take note of the

³⁵ *Du vrai*, 97-99.

³⁶ Leibniz, *Nouveaux essais*, 133.

former only on starting out with that which is limited and which affects our senses."³⁷ And he repeats much further on that "these necessary truths, being anterior to the existence of contingent beings, must be grounded in the existence of a necessary substance. It is there where the original of those ideas and truths engraved on our souls is to be found."³⁸

2. Cousin's adoption of the concept of the absolute should in no way be taken to indicate a parting of the ways between himself and Reid. On the contrary, on few points is the complementarity between Reid and Leibniz more evident than the question of the absolute, and in fact Reid escorts Cousin quite far on his journey to the absolute. There are several considerations which make this apparent.

First, if we think back to the first stage of Cousin's deduction of absolute being, it will be recalled that it involved the apprehension of certain absolute ideas—"the unity of consciousness, space and time, and various other principles or axioms." Clearly, these ideas are nothing other than various of Reid's first principles of commonsense.

Secondly, the "pure apperception" in terms of which Cousin characterizes the mind's grasp of the necessity of absolute being bears all the marks of that mental state which Reid attempts to capture in describing how we come to know first principles—undeniability combined with indemonstrability, and the like. The only difference is that Cousin shifts from talk of "principles" to "ideas," and since ideas cannot float about in a disembodied state (otherwise they would be like accidents without a substance—yet another impossibility, according to Reid's first principles), they must be grounded in some substantial being; and the necessity of this connection comes in the same intuitive mental act as does the inevitability of the ideas themselves.

Finally, there is no doubt whatsoever that Reid *believes* the first principles of commonsense (Cousin's absolute ideas) originate in God, even if he does not take it as essential to his philosophical enterprise to demonstrate as much. His third metaphysical principle, for example, holds "that design and intelligence in the cause may be inferred, with certainty, from marks or signs of it in the effect" (I,

³⁷ Ibid., 129.

³⁸ Ibid., 396.

457), which takes Reid himself to affirm that “the clear marks and signatures of wisdom, power and goodness, in the constitution of the world, is, of all arguments that have been advanced for the being and providence of the Deity, that which in all ages has made the strongest impression upon candid and thinking minds” (I, 460). Furthermore, in his discussion of the first principles of contingent truths he remarks that “from the existence of things contingent and mutable, we can infer the existence of an immutable and eternal cause of them” (I, 442). And how many times do we find Reid making use of some phrase such as “by the wise contrivance of our Maker” in explaining one or another of the concepts through which we interpret reality.

This, however, is as far as Reid pursues the matter. Making truth, beauty, and goodness into attributes of the divine substance, or the absolute, is simply too hypothetical for his philosophic temper.

3. Let us take this occasion to point out, in reference to the charge of pantheism which was to be leveled at Cousin’s later works, that these earlier lectures already indicate an avoidance on his part of any such position. For example, he remarks early on that “the absolute . . . is independent of man” (VBB, 32). At this point in this thinking, “the absolute” is only to be understood in terms of its ideal manifestations; but if these manifestations themselves are viewed as separate, certainly the substance in which they are grounded is independent too—even more so. And it is this absolute substance that he affirms, a bit further on, to be “neither in the self nor the non-self, it is superior to the one and to the other; the absolute soars beyond the relative” (VBB, 138). And elsewhere the same image occurs: “the absolute soars above humanity and nature, exercises dominion over them and governs them eternally, with this one difference, that the one knows it and the other doesn’t; but just the same, He is equally independent of them both” (VBB, 126).

This independence of the absolute, or God, insures that he can in no direct way be known. Cousin remarks at one point “we do not comprehend the absolute being himself, . . . we can but conceive the necessity of his existence” (VBB, 73). But in truth, this is too severe a representation of his own position. A more moderate statement of it—and one which harmonizes better with his overall outlook—has it that “as we are only acquainted with the subject through its attributes, we are only acquainted with the infinite substance through the

absolute truths of which it is the ground (*soutien*)” (VBB, 138-39). And elsewhere, alluding to “forms” rather than “truths,” he asserts that it is uniquely through the mediation of “three forms: the true, the beautiful and the good . . . that we arrive at the concept of God” (VBB, 109).

2.2 *Cours de Philosophie*; 1828

In his celebrated lectures of 1828—the course which marked his triumphant return to public instruction (published simply as *Cours de philosophie*)—Cousin developed certain of the ontological ramifications of his notion of the absolute. The concept itself, however, remains basically the same as in the lectures we have been considering to this point. The absolute is still asserted to stand as a necessary complement to the finite (CP; IV, 30-31), and the finite likewise divides itself into the same two components as before, namely, the self and the non-self (CP; V, 36). It is the self, of course, which recognizes the necessity of such an absolute (an epistemological and ontological necessity), and which recognizes, in addition, that this absolute must possess a nature which is in some sense *ideal* (CP; V, 12). Further, the ideal truths through which the absolute manifests itself are still taken to be “as independent of reason in its actual state as reason in itself is independent of the man in whom it appears” (CP; V, 12).

The most salient point enlarged upon in the later lectures concerns the causal relationship in which the absolute stands, or must be conceived of as standing, to finite reality. Or in theological terms, the relationship in which God stands to creation. And it is this point which seems to have elicited cries of “pantheism” from his detractors, despite his expressed hope that “no one will accuse me of confounding with the world that eternal intelligence which exists, prior to the world and to humanity, in the triple manner which is inherent to its nature” (CP; V, 16).

From the healthy distance at which we can view his efforts—at the remove of more than a century and a half—his aim seems to have been this: to harmonize that concept of the absolute, to which he had long been committed, with an account of creation which would (1) preserve the independence and the superiority of the infinite over the finite (the absolute over the relative), (2) account for the dependence

of the finite upon the infinite, and (3) do least violence to accepted church doctrines in the process.

His analysis begins with a critical evaluation of two rather familiar accounts of the relationship in question: the idea of creation from nothing, and the assertion of the independence of God and the world. From each of these, a lesson is learned which then forms part of the justification of his own position.

Concerning creation from nothing, Cousin begins by seconding the argument offered by many a philosopher that "from nothingness, nothing can emerge, from which would follow that the creation would be impossible" (CP; V, 22). Not content to rest with this one argument, however, he proceeds to examine the notion of nothingness, and finds it to be a hypothesis of a sort, but of a decidedly peculiar sort, namely, one which, akin to Cartesian doubt, effects its own demise. For "beneath any act of negation lies an affirmation . . . of the existence of whosoever makes this very supposition of nothingness." He concludes from this that nothingness itself is but "a chimera and a contradiction" (CP; V, 23-24).³⁹

If creation from nothing is to be ruled out, then either of two possibilities can be entertained: that creation involves *something* which is other than and independent of God, or that creation issues directly and exclusively from God. As to the former of these possibilities Cousin reasons that this independent something would have to be "sufficient in itself, absolute, eternal, infinite and all powerful" (CP; V, 24-25), all attributes, in short, that apply to God. Withdrawal of any of them would, so to speak, effect the annihilation of this supposedly independent reality. But to maintain its existence would be, in effect, to place "two all powerful substances in contradiction with one another" (CP, V, 25), another absurdity.

³⁹ We might note here that upon a view which held creation to be a unique event, this latter point could easily be countered, since prior to such an act of creation there would only have been God and nothingness, neither of which would be making any suppositions about nothingness. But Cousin's own view regarding creation does sit comfortably with this particular argument, for he holds—as have many other theistic philosophers, such as Leibniz (see, for example, his *Discourse on Metaphysics*, sects. 14 and 32, his *Monadology*, sect. 47, or his *Systema Theologicum*, par. 2)—that "creation is inexhaustible and sustains itself continually" (V, 27). As such, the individual who contemplates nothingness is indeed something rather than nothing, and is at the same time undergoing some manner of creation.

The only remaining alternative, then, is that creation issues directly and exclusively from God. Thus Cousin, in his most notorious passage, asserts "God creates; he creates in virtue of his creative power, and he draws the universe, not from nonentity, but from himself, who is absolute existence. His distinguishing characteristic being an absolute creative force, which cannot but pass into activity, it follows, not that the creation is possible, but that it is necessary."⁴⁰

Now, is it legitimate to conclude from the foregoing, as Hamilton does, (and as many others apparently did), that "on this theory, God is not distinct from the world; the creature is a modification of the creator"?⁴¹ Cousin himself is convinced that this does not follow. To show why not, he strikes an analogy between human and divine creative causality.

Man causes things to come into being, and in so doing he calls up something of himself and imparts it to that which he creates (CP; V, 28). We readily detect an intimate—perhaps even a necessary—relationship between the man and his work, but do we ever think to *identify* the two? When Bach, for example, produced his *Magnificat*, the work owed its entire being to him; without Bach it would never have come to be, while he in turn required nothing but his own creative genius to bring it into being. Yet we say only that the work is Bach's: we would never think of saying it *is* Bach. We acknowledge that the *Magnificat* in some crucial respect "bears his stamp"—in such a manner, likewise, as "the universe is an imperfect reflection, though a reflection nonetheless, of the divine essence" (CP; V, 30). But the very thought that the work is somehow a "modification" of Bach is absurd.

We also grant, with equal willingness, that Bach the creator spun yet further works from his fertile mind; that he was not, so to speak, *spent* in this act of creation, nor in any sum of such creations. Similarly, "the internal principle of causation, while developing in and through its acts, retains that which makes it principle and cause,

⁴⁰ Hamilton, "Philosophy of the Unconditioned," 41, his translation. Cousin's assertion occurs in CP; V, 27.

⁴¹ Ibid. Let us keep in mind here that the only pantheistic element in this quote concerns God drawing creation from himself. That God is an absolute creative force or that creation is somehow necessary might be found objectionable by some, but on grounds other than that they imply pantheism.

and is not at all absorbed into its effects. . . . God remains whole, in his essential unity and triplicity" (CP; V, 29).

In such a fashion as this, then, does Cousin endeavor to (1) preserve his notion of the absolute, (2) supply a coherent account of creation, and (3) assure the separateness of the Deity from His creation. In effect, it is accomplished through developing the notion of God as absolute cause—a notion which remains only implicit in his earlier account of the absolute. As *absolute* cause, it seems no more reasonable to conceive of it being exhausted in or spread through its effects as it would be to conceive of absolute truth being spent in rendering true propositions true, or parceled out among true propositions.⁴²

Such is the essence of Cousin's metaphysical thinking. It appears that his concept of the absolute—the very axis of this system—suffered no influence from Schelling or from any of the absolute idealists, even in its later "version." There are nevertheless certain Hegelian touches discernible in this *Cours*, and though they stand apart from the central, metaphysical thrust, they do deserve to be mentioned.

1. There is a doctrine of historical necessity developed in the latter half of the text, where it is argued that what is, *must* be, and because it must be, it is *right*. Even this, though, might be traced to Leibniz, with his belief in the preestablished harmony and his conviction that this is the best of all possible worlds. Certainly Cousin's remarks concerning universal harmony, which occur at the very beginning of his treatment of historical necessity, enhance this possibility (CP; V, 30-33). Still, Cousin is much readier than Leibniz ever was—and in this he more closely resembles Hegel—to interpret particular historical events in the light of their historical necessity. And so it is that the wars and the waste, the struggles and the sufferings of generation upon generation of men should have been waged and endured in order to render possible (and, of course, actual and necessary)—the French Constitutional Monarchy of 1828! The sublimity of this pronouncement barely had a chance to sink in

⁴² It is interesting to see much of the same reasoning reproduced in Jacques Jalabert's *Le Dieu de Leibniz* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960) in defending Leibniz against the charge of pantheism (217-22).

before Charles X dissolved the Chamber of Deputies and yet another revolution erupted; necessarily, of course.

Actually, a wholehearted endorsement of Hegelianism would have obliged Cousin to abandon the notion of agent causality to which we have seen he subscribed, for clearly there is no room in Hegel's system for particular individuals to stand up against the inevitable unfolding of the Idea. But in this his most "Hegelian" work there is no indication that he was aware of this. Indeed, in defining the self he still asserts that it is constituted by "free, voluntary activity" (CP; VII, 28).

2. A certain *triadicty* governs the flow of events and ideas in Cousin's philosophy of history. However, Cousin's triad—the infinite, the finite and the relationship between them—is strictly his own, not Hegel's; and furthermore, it is his only one: there is no triadic *movement* of the sort that can be found in Hegel's system, nor any triadic *architectonic*.

In short, Cousin's philosophy barely grazed against Hegel's. To claim any more, one would have to be almost completely ignorant of Hegel's philosophy, which virtually all of Cousin's contemporaries—in France, at least—were.

To sum up the results of this section in the broadest terms, I have argued that the true impetus behind Cousin's metaphysics lay in his desire to supply some ontological ground for the otherwise Reidean philosophical perspective he had absorbed, and for this ground he turned more to Leibniz than to anyone else. In fact, if it was for any reason desirable to preserve some sense in which Cousin's philosophy could still be referred to as eclectic, I suggest it would more properly be in this vastly restricted sense in which commonsense metaphilosophy and epistemology blend with certain traits of Leibnizian metaphysics to form a synthesis of a sort in which these elements complement one another.

Perhaps it was his perception of this fact which led Cousin in later years to be critical of the presumptions involved in such a notion as eclecticism. After all, he reflected, unless a philosopher has a philosophical doctrine of his own that provides a criterion for selecting what is true and rejecting what is false in the history of philosophy, he has no way of justifying such judgments. He writes,

There is something which we place above the history of philosophy, and, consequently, above eclecticism—philosophy itself. The history of philosophy does not carry its own light with it, it is not its own end. How could eclecticism, which has no other field than history, be our only, our primary, object? It is, doubtless, just . . . to discriminate in each system what there is true in it from what there is false in it. . . . But you conceive that we must already know what truth is, in order to recognize it, and to distinguish it from the error with which it is mixed; so that the criticism of systems almost demands a system, so that the history of philosophy is constrained to first borrow from philosophy the light which it must one day return to it with usury.⁴³

He then baptized his new, more enlightened approach with the name Spiritualism, claiming thus,

Our true flag is spiritualism . . . which teaches the spirituality of the soul, the liberty and responsibility of human action, moral obligation, disinterested virtue, the dignity of justice, the beauty of charity; and beyond the limits of this world it shows a God, author and type of humanity, who, after having evidently made man for an excellent end, will not abandon him in the mysterious development of his destiny. (*Du vrai*, vii-viii)

Spiritualism became the name, then, by which not just Cousin's own philosophy, but the system imbibed and promulgated by his numerous followers throughout much of the remainder of the century, was known. We will be meeting with a number of these followers in the succeeding chapters of this book.

3. *Aesthetic Theory*

When we come to consider Cousin's aesthetics we find his reliance upon Reid to be still very strong, although certain shifts in emphasis

⁴³ Victor Cousin, *Lectures on the True, the Beautiful and the Good*, trans. O. Wight (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1854), 35-36. I use this translation of *Du vrai* here because the disparaging (and important) reference to eclecticism which it contains had fallen out of the later version (1878) of the original French from which I have been quoting.

and terminology do tend to disguise this fact.⁴⁴ In order to mark these similarities and differences let me begin by noting that within the discipline of aesthetics itself there is an aspect which might be thought of as epistemological in character and an aspect which is ontological.

The epistemological dimension involves our apprehension of beauty, and is concerned, first, with whether our judgments of beauty are mere utterances of subjective preference, or whether they are based on any criteria which might render them objective. Secondly, it seeks to establish whether these judgments terminate with the individual, or whether they are in some respect universalizable. The ontological dimension involves the question of the source of beauty—from what does beauty derive; what power in nature, or out of it, imparts to objects their beauty.

In Reid, the ontological source of beauty consisted in God, with respect to natural beauty, and mind, where human beauty and the beauty of our creation is concerned; and the means through which this source realized itself was expression. With Cousin, expression retains its central importance, while it is the absolute—which of course is equatable with God—that expresses itself through nature. But in addition, the absolute supplies the criterion by which we can judge of the beauties of human creation—and indeed in reference to which the artist produces beautiful works of art. This explicit link between the ontological and the epistemological which Cousin forges has its direct parallel in his metaphysics, which we just examined, and it constitutes here as well a point of departure from Reid's outlook.

In the epistemological dimension of his aesthetics, Cousin introduces the notion of *ideal beauty* as the element which links our apprehension of beauty to the absolute, on the one hand, and supplies

⁴⁴ In presenting Cousin's aesthetics, I draw most heavily from his 1818 lectures *Du vrai* for two principal reasons. First, it was these lectures which directly influenced Jouffroy and other important intellectuals in the 1820's, and which were then published in 1836, allowing for almost two decades more of influence prior to the appearance of the revised version of *Du vrai*. Secondly, the aesthetic theory presented in the later version is not substantially different from its earlier formulation in substance, though it is somewhat more streamlined. In any case, where new material does appear I indicate as much; and where identical passages occur in both works, I indicate this also.

both artist and audience with a criterion for producing and detecting beautiful things, on the other. This ideal beauty is treated by Cousin as an attribute of the absolute, in the same manner in which those special truths possessing both universality and necessity were claimed above to be grounded in the absolute. This link between ideal beauty and the absolute constitutes a move which Reid would have regarded as pure speculation, hence it has no correlate in his aesthetics. The *function* of ideal beauty within Cousin's system, however, does correlate with an important element of Reid's aesthetics, namely, his belief that taste has first principles. Ideal beauty, just as these first principles of taste, serves as the *objective* criterion which enables us to detect beauty where it appears; and as objective in this fashion, ideal beauty similarly serves to ground whatever claim to *universality* our aesthetic judgments can make. Before beginning our analysis of Cousin's aesthetics with a close look at this epistemological aspect of it, I should like to call attention to two points.

One of the difficulties we must be mindful of in this analysis is a certain terminological imprecision on Cousin's part, which unfortunately is most noticeable in his employment of key concepts. His use of the word "absolute," for one, is quite ragged. As we saw in Part 2, "the absolute" was regarded by him as the *source* of the necessary truths which are revealed in our experience, the *being* who constituted their ground—God. In his treatment of beauty the absolute does indeed perform this same function, but in numerous instances he uses the term in a manner which, in relation to the system he is developing, corresponds really to "ideal." At the very outset, for example, he declares that "in order for a theory of the fine arts (*les beaux-arts*) to be possible there must be some absolute element in beauty" (VBB, 182). Now clearly the absolute, while the *ultimate ground* of beauty (as of truth and goodness), cannot in any direct way participate in our apprehension of beauty—that role is assigned to *ideal beauty*. "God," he tells us, "is impenetrable: reason has no access to his nature: he must manifest himself through an exterior which is accessible and intelligible: this exterior consists in the idea of the true, the beautiful, and the good" (VBB, 261). He even reverses the absolute and the ideal in the opposite manner here and there. Thus he says in one instance, "The ideal is a point which draws itself back endlessly and eludes us to infinity" (VBB, 207); in

fact, it is the absolute which eludes us—the ideal constitutes all we can know of the absolute.

“Truth” is another word which shifts in significance from place to place. It may, of course, just be used to refer to that special property which renders true propositions true (this is no place, of course, to pursue a theory of truth in this sense). More often, though, Cousin uses the term to refer to the class of those special truths which lie at the core of human experience—necessary and universal truths—which constitute the attributes of absolute substance. Yet elsewhere, truth is the word he uses, but *rationality* seems to be the idea he is attempting to enunciate, as for example when he asserts “truth and that portion of truth we call beauty is not enclosed within each of us, but is like a territory (*patrie*) common to all humanity” (VBB, 197). Here it might have been more accurate to say that rationality, not truth, is what is common to us all. Wherever one of these irregularities appears in a quotation which I have provided, I indicate what I believe the appropriate term to be.

A second point to note is that the one sense of “objectivity” for which Reid, as we have seen, argued so strenuously—that in which we attribute beauty to the beautiful object and not the experiencing subject—is not addressed directly by Cousin. This, however, indicates no shift of position on his part; rather, it shows how wholly he accepted Reid’s argumentation. Such a view is embedded in Cousin’s entire approach to an extent that makes it apparent that he regarded any repetition of the point as thoroughly redundant.⁴⁵ With this in mind, then, let us proceed.

3.1 *Universality, Objectivity and the Ideal*

As just noted, Cousin asserts that the very possibility of a theory of the fine arts requires “some absolute element.” All this phrase means at this stage of his argument, however, is “something fixed, invariable”—in a word, something *objective*. It is interesting to note in this context that in the translation of Reid’s works by Jouffroy (Cousin’s student), the word “absolute” is introduced where Reid speaks of a “standard.” Thus the statement “Those who conceive that there is no

⁴⁵ This same spirit is manifest in Jouffroy’s aesthetics, as well, where, after a brief characterization of Reid’s position concerning objectivity, he remarks, simply, “Cela prouvé, . . .” and proceeds on to other matters. (*Cours d’esthétique*, 117).

standard in nature by which taste may be regulated . . . go upon slender and insufficient ground. The same arguments might be used with equal force against any standard of truth" (I, 492), is rendered "Ceux qui prétend qu'il n'y a rien d'absolu en matière de goût . . . soutiennent une opinion insoutenable. On pourrait prouver, par les mêmes raisons, qu'il n'y a rien d'absolu en matière de vérité."⁴⁶ A standard would serve as that objective something on which our aesthetic judgments would rely, and it would likewise assure the universality of these judgments, inasmuch as that which is objective is available for *all* to consult.

In effect, then, all Cousin is asserting here is that should the question of beauty be found to reduce to matters of individual likes and dislikes—to the pleasures certain objects produce in certain individuals—then the most we could manage in the way of analysis of such pleasures would be an empirical catalogue of personal preferences, in which there would be little likelihood of finding any salient points of agreement among men, and no grounds whatever for exacting any such agreement. A true science, he believes, makes stronger demands on its subject matter than any such empirical survey could hope to provide.

Now surely the above consideration can hardly constitute the reason for locating an objective element in beauty—that a science of the beautiful would be impossible without it—for it is easy simply to deny that there are objective standards of beauty and live with the consequence that no science of the beautiful is possible. Many philosophers have reached this very conclusion, and most of the world, it must be conceded, doesn't really care one way or the other (and if pressed, most people would probably be distressed to think that there was such a thing as the science of the beautiful, either because it might at some point force them to confront the fact that their own taste was inadequate, or because the very idea of a science would threaten to dispel the magic and mystery which surround things of beauty). It is one thing to claim that the absence of any objective standard would render human cognition impossible, but quite another to claim that it would render the science of beauty impossible. We can't get by without cognition, but we can still

⁴⁶ Reid, *Oeuvres complètes*, trad. Théodore Jouffroy, 6 vols., (Paris: Victor Masson, 1829-1836), V, 256.

manage to live a reasonably rewarding life without a science of the beautiful. The contention that such standards must apply within the realm of the beautiful is in need, therefore, of further justification.

To supply additional substantiation to this claim, Cousin makes an appeal to certain of our most basic attitudes, as they are embedded in our habits of thought and discourse:

If someone tells us that he enjoys something, or that it causes him pain, it never occurs to us to contest his assertion unless we believe him to be lying. When on the contrary we judge that a certain face is beautiful, and if someone should contend that it isn't, our interchange clearly is one which transpires in a domain common to all men, a domain where anyone has the right to contest another's judgment and where we would accuse our adversary not of prevarication but of error. (VBB, 197)

I alone am the judge of what pleases and what displeases me; I do not feel the need to force my pleasures on others and I am resentful when others attempt to impose theirs on me. Where beauty is involved, however, "we call upon an authority which is not just our own but which imposes itself on all men" (VBB, 196). If people were content generally to give voice only to their likes and dislikes, their pleasures and displeasures, the idea of beauty would never have achieved the status it has. The fact that mankind quite generally does behave as if beauty is to be found in the beautiful object—disputing its presence here and there, holding the opinions of some higher than the opinions of others, establishing institutions to instruct people in its creation, and so forth—perhaps does suggest that it is an object worthy of scientific treatment. And that, for Cousin, implies that it has some objective standards.

Although the arguments in the above paragraph resemble certain of those offered by Kant in his *Critique of Judgment*,⁴⁷ Cousin is not willing, as was Kant, to settle for asserting the subjective universality of our aesthetic judgments—he is clearly aiming to establish their objective universality. And the feature of the beautiful, he feels, which makes this possible is its rational aspect. Here again he aligns

⁴⁷ See, for example, Sections 3-5 in the first Moment of his "Analytic of the Beautiful."

himself with Reid, and we find him remarking, in a late work on Scottish philosophy, "Reid placed reason above sentiment. . . . It is this, along with his theory of the moral aspect of beauty, which constitutes the prize and the originality of his *Essay on Taste*."⁴⁸

It is in connection with rationality that Cousin introduces the notion of ideal beauty, the concept which comes to represent in his theory the criterion of aesthetic excellence. To clarify somewhat the nature of this concept, a word or two about rationality is in order.

"Rationality" has had different significances at different times and in different philosophical systems, but it is Reid's understanding of the term which is most relevant here, since Cousin shows no systematic deviance from Reid on this point, and as we just noted, he applauds Reid's use of the concept in his aesthetics. Reid drew no distinction between understanding (as the faculty of concepts) and reason. For him the first principles of commonsense, which present themselves to us in propositional form, stood as proper points of departure for all discursive reasoning, hence were to be thought of as part of that very reasoning process itself. Reason, that is to say, was seen by Reid as involving not just the (rule-governed) advance from premises to conclusion, but also as including the ultimate premises themselves. Indeed, it might easily be argued that the first principles of commonsense were the *sole* constituents of rationality, for among the first principles of necessary truths are to be found what Reid terms "logical axioms," which if fully enumerated would undoubtedly present a catalogue of the inference and transformation rules governing discursive reasoning. In short, then, certain of Reid's first principles (including whatever he has in mind as first principles of taste) represent points from which the rational process can proceed, while others provide the rules by which this process ought to proceed.

Now Cousin does not speak of first principles of taste, but in its place he locates ideal beauty right alongside the other notions which, as we saw in his metaphysical deduction of absolute being, he treated as something akin to modes of "the true," which is one of the attributes of the absolute. And as we noted in that discussion, all the items which were thus grounded in the absolute turned out to be various of Reid's first principles. Ideal beauty, then, is understood

⁴⁸ Victor Cousin, *Philosophie écossaise* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1864), 426.

by Cousin as possessing the same ultimacy as these principles, and can therefore be understood as constituting another of the attributes of the absolute. In this fashion, ideal beauty would represent the ultimate point of reference for the assessment of the beauty of any particular object, and it derives its rationality from being one of the nativistic components of mind all of which taken together constitute human reason.

This ideal beauty is not viewed by Cousin as just some airy abstraction. It is graspable in some definite if not always specifiable fashion, he claims, through a process which he labels "immediate abstraction." (Actually, I find little to distinguish "immediate abstraction" from "pure apperception," discussed above in Section 2.1. Indeed, both seem identical in terms of process as well as result, further indication, perhaps, of the "raw" state of these transcriptions.) To illustrate what is involved in immediate abstraction he offers a sample analysis of the concept of triangularity. We do not learn what a triangle is by drawing a generalization based on the observation of a collection of triangles, for there is every bit as much triangularity in the first one as there is in any and all triangles subsequently considered. Nor do we apply to a given figure an idea which the mind somehow mysteriously (Cousin says "incomprehensibly") possesses prior to any confrontation with actual or even imaginary triangular shapes. What is necessary, he claims, is that, first, a figure be given to us, and then from it we extract a sense of the ideal of triangularity. In Cousin's own words "an individual [is] given, and without recourse to any comparison, we disengage from the core of the individual a point of view which is general and absolute" (VBB, 205).⁴⁹ The other examples of this process which he

⁴⁹ I find the coupling of "general" with "absolute" a bit disturbing here, as he has already ruled out methods of generalization as being incapable of grasping anything absolute. Apparently he too felt it a bit disquieting, as towards the end of this chapter (VBB, 212) he speaks of how the mind seizes immediately the manner in which "the first object to submit to its inspection contains the general, *or rather*, the absolute" (my emphasis). Let us remember that this text is derived from students' notes, taken from lectures that were in good measure spontaneous. Basically the same description of this process of immediate abstraction occurs in his essay "Du beau réel et du beau idéal," which appears in *Fragmens Philosophique* (Paris: Ladrangé, 1833), 339-50, and in *Du vrai*, 44-45, on the subject of absolute truths in general.

cites have to do with circularity and the causal law—neither of which belongs to the aesthetic domain.

The realism which Cousin adopted from Reid is strongly influential in this notion of immediate abstraction, for it is essential to the process that an object external to the subject be *given*: without an occasioning object, no ideal would ever present itself to mind. The ideal, however, is in no way part of the object: objects as we experience them are destined to founder in a sea of generalizations. Epistemically speaking, therefore, the ideal must be supplied by the mind, or in Cousin's own words, it "appears as an original conception of mind" (VBB, 186). But if the mind were its ultimate source, as Kant holds, it would drown in a pool of subjectivity. We have already seen (in Section 2.1) that Cousin treats Kantianism as a form of subjectivism, which leaves Kant as something of a skeptic. The ideal, therefore, must owe its being to a source external to the mind. And since what is at issue here *is* the ideal, this source can only be the absolute—anything less could not provide us with ideals, properly speaking.

Immediate abstraction thus sounds akin to the process attributable to Reid concerning the discernment of first principles in general—up to the point, of course, at which Cousin invokes the absolute. This kinship does diminish somewhat when we consider that of the three examples Cousin gives of the process, only one involves a notion which Reid would include among his first principles, that being causality. Triangularity and circularity fail to qualify, for though there are indeed first principles of mathematics and geometry, the defining characteristics of particular geometric shapes (of which there are infinitely many) would not count as such. On this point, then, Cousin seems to come closer to espousing a doctrine of innate ideas, rather than a position which accords with a Reidean treatment of first principles, for Reid's first principles, as we have already had occasion to note, offer themselves to the mind not just as ideas, but as whole propositions. If we could find some means of assuring ourselves that these two cases, the triangle and the circle, are merely offered as examples of what the process of immediate abstraction is *like*, and not as genuine products of that process, then this problem would be explained away; but it is not clear, from the text, that we can.

This mode of coming to an awareness of the ideal, let it be noted, is not treated by Cousin as an arcane process, performable only by a few eccentric savants and only after years of training and preparation. Both the creative artist and the sensitive viewer (reader, listener) will be in possession of such an ideal and will be adept at bringing it to bear upon this or that particular subject matter. Each and every time we perceive the beauty in a scene or an object we do not, of course, immediately abstract the ideal from the phenomenon presented; but for our judgment to the effect that a certain something is beautiful to be sound and justifiable, our mind must be in some definite rapport with ideal beauty. Indeed it must be in touch with such an ideal even when we judge something to be ugly or just uninteresting, for these judgments follow from our remarking the extent to which the object in question falls short of ideal beauty. Sound aesthetic judgment, then, always presupposes knowledge of the ideal.

So too does artistic creation demand a keen sense of ideal beauty. It goes without saying that not everything created is beautiful—many a work does little more than slavishly imitate one aspect or another of the reality which surrounds us, or doggedly adhere to worn out compositional formulas. There are those artists, however, who seek to present an idealized version of reality, and since reality itself is not and can never be ideal, such artists as these must draw their inspiration from within themselves: as Cousin puts it, “il y a des artistes qui travaillent *de tête*” (VBB, 189). And what can be within them to help in this regard other than a sense of ideal beauty? No matter what the object, no matter how beautiful and impeccable the natural landscape or the work of art, it could never be deemed a full realization of the ideal. In truth, full realization of the ideal is a logical impossibility in Cousin’s view: “ideal beauty can only be thought” (VBB, 214). And that process of thinking which leads to ideal beauty, to repeat, is called immediate abstraction.

The question as to whether artists should provide direct imitation of nature or should in some manner idealize it has a long history. Most of the elements of the controversy can be found in Plato and Aristotle, and it has been played out many times in the modern era beginning with the formulation of the *ut pictura poesis* doctrine. Cousin bypasses these earlier versions, however, and focuses instead on a contemporary debate in France that was being carried on between Eméric-David and Quatremère de Quincy.

Eméric-David took the position that what was exemplary in Greek statuary was its assiduous reproduction of natural objects, enabling that art form to attain to the highest expression of life achievable.⁵⁰ Quatremère de Quincy responded to this claim by forwarding the view that the great works created by the Greeks in fact did not present nature as it appeared, but instead created an idealized version of it.⁵¹ We should not be surprised at finding Cousin expressing a preference for the latter approach, given the prominent position which the ideal occupies in his aesthetics. Yet he does not merely second de Quincy's position; however much he is drawn to the idealized side, he still endeavors to negotiate a settlement between the two opposing views.

"As for myself," Cousin writes, "I think the Greeks set out neither from the real nor the ideal in complete isolation, but from the one and the other at the same time" (VBB, 209). For art to be effective, in fact, reality must be given its due: the more nearly pure the ideal representation the more it will approach the kind of truth seized, say, by mathematics; in Cousin's words "the ideal by itself is cold and lacking in vivacity" (VBB, 189). But accordingly, the absolute domination of sensibility over reason would replace beauty with the pleasant or the agreeable. The true sentiment which accompanies our perception of beauty, however, does not arise in some fashion independent of our judgment that something is beautiful; rather, it is "provoked . . . by the absolute judgment which led us to conceive of beauty" (VBB, 231). This sentiment, properly understood, follows judgment; it is not independent of our judgment, and it certainly doesn't (contra the empiricists) precede it.

Art, it might be said, serves two masters; it must be pleasing to our physical sensibility, but also it must satisfy our reason (VBB, 208). And the way art can touch our sensibility is to represent objects, people, scenes, in a recognizable fashion, in a fashion with which we can sympathize. Sympathy, as we will see shortly, is a concept which comes to occupy a central position in Jouffroy's

⁵⁰ Eméric-David, T.-B. *Recherches sur l'art statuaire chez les anciens* (Paris: Veuve Nyon aîné, 1805).

⁵¹ Quatremère de Quincy, A.-C., "Essai sur l'idéal dans ses applications pratiques aux oeuvres de l'imitation propre des arts du dessin," *Archives Littéraires*, 1805.

aesthetics. With Cousin it is only mentioned briefly, but it is precisely in this context that it takes on whatever importance it has for him. A painting or statue purified of individuating features might succeed in depicting a certain emotional state, but it would not capture our hearts in that special manner of which not only is art capable, but which constitutes its distinct province. The aim of art, ultimately, is to capture the broadest truths in the most individual fashion possible.

Cousin is quite clearly on the trail of what, under the influence of Hegelian aesthetics, came to be known as the concrete universal. Indeed he comes closer to using this terminology in his 1828 lectures where he reaches the concept of beauty, interestingly, through a consideration of human greatness. "A great man," he judges, "is himself and his people all at once" (CP; X, 11). Where "generality does not overwhelm particularity and particularity does not dissolve generality . . . there is found true human greatness. This measure, which constitutes grandeur, likewise constitutes true beauty" (CP; X, 8). Here again, as with Cousin's metaphysics, if one's first exposure to his thinking came by way of the 1828 lectures the temptation would be great to attribute more of an influence to Hegel than the facts of the matter justify. As we can see, Cousin's position was already drawn up before Hegel would have had much of any effect on his thinking; it was simply expressed in different terms—in terms of idealization. And besides, Hegel had no claims to exclusivity on this issue: as we noted above, it is an ancient dispute; Hegel merely tossed one more means of resolving it into the hat.

This issue is an important one in aesthetics and even in art criticism, yet it is undeniably tricky as well, and attempts to formulate it are highly susceptible to charges of vacuity if not drawn out in sufficient detail. It is obvious, for example, that the judgment to the effect that a certain author—Agatha Christie, say—does not offer characters but mere stereotypes is a serious critical comment. Painters too are often, and it seems justly, faulted for portraying not individuals but general types. The "official" art within the Soviet Union depicting sturdy, handsome, contented workers, or the images that adorn the cover of any harlequin romance novel are instances of this defect which spring readily to mind. On the other hand, Dostoevsky is praised for offering us characters as rich as any we might hope to meet in real life (and more entertaining than the ones

we do), while painters from Velasquez to Toulouse-Lautrec are lauded for their honest personal depictions (though Velasquez couldn't represent a horse to save his life), and Monet's canvases, it is said, are as natural as if he had set down his easel while blindfolded.

Nevertheless, any character, however stereotypical, will be portrayed through a complex of attributes which can actually be found embodied in this or that particular individual. And Cousin himself grants that "every human face is composed of a certain number of individual traits, . . . and at the same time it presents general traits which make of it . . . not the physiognomy of this individual or that, but a human face" (VBB, 210). This is to say that a hollow, abstracted character has its share of particularizing features, while a detailed representation of any individual can nonetheless be described in general terms. Cousin has put his finger on an important general truth about artistic creation, but without a good deal more precision as to how to make our way meaningfully between these two extremes, he does not offer much advice for an artist to live by or a critic to work from. In any case, the salutary doctrine that it is not the concern of the artist merely to copy nature does emerge from Cousin's analysis.

That Cousin chose to formulate his position in terms of ideal beauty rather than merely adopt Reid's notion of the first principles of taste has led various interpreters to attribute to him some dependence on Schelling here also, as well as in his metaphysics, but such an attribution seems groundless. The chronological sequence continues to recommend against any such connection, as Cousin's own position seems to be in place prior to any appreciable exposure to Schelling's ideas. More importantly, though, the two thinkers speak of two different ideals: Cousin's ideal beauty is systematically formulated in the singular—one absolute, after all, one ideal beauty to disclose it—while Schelling conceives of a panorama of ideals corresponding to our notions of various species. We do find his view echoed in the works of certain individuals to be examined later—Lévêque in Chapter 4 and Gaborit in Chapter 5—but we can find no such dependence in Cousin.

In short, ideal beauty in Cousin's aesthetics provides an objective criterion for aesthetic judgment of the same sort as Reid's first principles of taste; and furthermore, the alliance between ideal beauty

and rationality offers the same justification for asserting the universality of such judgments as Reid's theory does.

3.2 Expression and the Absolute

The previous section has offered a view of the ideal from a decidedly human perspective. We detect beauties around us, in nature, in ourselves, in art, and in seeking to account for the most striking feature of our experience Cousin purports to take us one step behind the surface of experience and claims to have found an ideal which supplies unity and coherence to this family of judgments. Note, however, that at this stage of the explanation he does not believe he has lost touch with experience. Surely beauty is something we experience, and through immediate abstraction the ideal which renders our judgments coherent is also (albeit in a more mysterious sense) experienced, ("mysterious" because the experience involved is not of the sensory variety, but rather some form of rational intuition). Still, he would find no grounds for admitting that there is anything occult about either the process or its results. Cousin's account of the source of ideal beauty itself, however, takes us yet one step deeper into the beyond, into a realm the denizen of which is not an active component in our experience and is not capable of being grasped by any of the means or in any of the senses that ideal beauty (or truth, or goodness) is. Naturally, it is the absolute, or God, which is taken to be that ultimate source.

As we saw when we were considering Cousin's epistemology and metaphysics, the basic truths which underlie our experience of this world are not construed by him to be mere impositions of our subjectivity on the data of experience, but must be grounded in some objective source, for the objectivity of the world about us is something which we immediately (i.e., non-reflectively) apprehend; and if the a priori truths which pertain to this world are not of our own making, as our experience insists, they must derive from some objective source. And the only reality which is adequate to the grounding of pure truth is pure being—the absolute. A similar line of reasoning applied to the question of the beautiful leads to the same result: God is the necessary source of ideal beauty.

Beyond God's manifestations through the modes of truth, beauty and goodness, however, we are only capable of grasping the necessity of his being: "We do not comprehend the absolute being

himself . . . we can but conceive the necessity of his existence" (VBB, 73). "God is impenetrable: reason has no access to his nature: he must manifest himself through an exterior which is accessible and intelligible: this exterior consists in the idea of the true, the beautiful and the good" (VBB, 261). These ideas are "forms appropriate to human intelligence" (VBB, 261). Beauty thus can lead us *toward* God, but only asymptotically. All attempts to realize the ideal and know God, while they can and will enjoy success in varying degrees, can never be fully successful. "The ideal (by which he means here the absolute) is a point which draws itself back endlessly and eludes us to infinity. . . . Every work of art is thus no more than an approximation: the last term of the ideal is in the infinite, or in God. From the point at which human efforts are exhausted, up to God, there stands an interval which cannot be spanned" (VBB, 207).

Briefly, then, the ideal of beauty, in a (necessarily inadequate) sense brings God to man; it connects God and man umbilically, so to speak, providing us with assurance of God's necessary presence. As a result, the more sensitized we are to beauty, the closer we draw to the absolute itself: "art has a religious aspect to it" (VBB, 194). Even this foray into the unknowable, however, is viewed by Cousin not as consisting in a lapse into pure speculation, but as an effort to supply a proper ontological grounding for concepts which have a direct application within experience.

Each of these three central concepts—truth, beauty, goodness—when pushed to its limit merges with the others, according to Cousin: in the absolute end, "the beautiful is *identical* with the good and the true" (VBB, 206). However, this identity is only to be found in the absolute itself; from our own (necessarily) finite perspective, differentiating features will always be manifest.

Up to this point in our analysis, ideal beauty has been viewed principally in its relation to the concept of truth. We have seen, that is, how the ideal, through its alliance with rationality, supplies an objective criterion for beauty akin to the criteria which we have for the determination of truth. But there is a similar relationship which exists between ideal beauty and the good, and it is this relationship which introduces the concept of *expression*, inasmuch as goodness is reflective of an inner moral state, and such states can only come to be known through externalized, expressive acts. Indeed, the world offers up many different beauties for our appreciation—from a face

to a forest, a gesture to a statue or a palace, we apply the description “beautiful” to each of these objects, and to numberless others as well. And it is their *expressiveness*, Cousin holds, which justifies our application of the same term to each of them: the capacity of each to function as “the sign of an interior beauty, or a spiritual and moral beauty—here lies the foundation, the principle, the unity of the beautiful” (VBB, 254).⁵²

Cousin cites Winckelmann’s analysis of the Apollo Belvédère to illustrate the manner in which art is expressive, for Winckelmann repeatedly makes inferences from the visible surface of the work, which alone the eye is capable of apprehending, to the spiritual “interior” which is disclosed in and through this surface (VBB, 254-56).⁵³ But Cousin does not stop here: he infers that the same process would be at work in our minds if it were a man and not a statue standing before us. Indeed, he explains how, in the case of Socrates, the nobility of his soul and his peaceful resoluteness overwhelm those of his features which might be judged (by an inattentive onlooker) to be unsightly and, seizing control of his countenance, render it positively beautiful. Nor does Cousin stop here: even brute nature, he urges, is found beautiful by us for this same reason. “If one should come upon a bit of matter which expressed nothing, which signified nothing, the idea of the beautiful would no longer apply to it.”⁵⁴ But such a notion is no more than a hypothetical construct, and its embodiment is nowhere to be found in reality, for “all which exists is animated. Matter is moved and penetrated by powers which themselves are not material, and it follows laws which attest to the presence of a ubiquitous intelligence” (VBB, 258-59).⁵⁵ In short, Cousin asks, “la face de la nature, n’est-elle pas expressive comme celle de l’homme?” (VBB, 259).⁵⁶

Where nature is expressive—and it is deemed by Cousin to be everywhere expressive—it is of course the absolute which is illuminating the surface of things. Human beings express their own interior states, certain of which are found beautiful. Works of art are

⁵² See also *Du vrai*, 168.

⁵³ See also *Du vrai*, 163-65.

⁵⁴ See also *Du vrai*, 167.

⁵⁵ See also *Du vrai*, 167.

⁵⁶ See also *Du vrai*, 167.

somewhat more obscure in their signification, for their expressed content could be traced to any of several sources. The artist could be construed as expressing himself through his work—this, it will be recalled, is the interpretation which Reid opted for. Again, God could be the spiritual force behind certain works—those which have a material form of embodiment, such as paintings or sculptures—for on the present account there is no corner of the physical universe which is not to some degree animated by the divinity: a totem pole and a tree are both “of the same substance,” after all. Neither Reid, Cousin, nor any of their successors seems to incline toward this view. Or again, the work of art itself could be said to have its own interior of some sort. Based on his analysis of the Apollo Belvédère, Cousin appears to incline toward this possibility, as he speaks of it as if it were a person of a sort, though obviously a very peculiar sort. In relation to his overall system, however, this seems as if it would create some grave ontological problems. Actually, in our final chapter we will see Sully-Prudhomme affirming this position, though he does so from a considerably different ontological base than Cousin. In any case, this is a point on which Cousin is decidedly vague. Given the closeness between his and Reid’s ontologies on this matter, one can only wish that he had elected to pursue the same line of interpretation.

Where humans are concerned, Cousin speaks at one point of three species of beauty: physical, moral and intellectual. The physical quickly collapses, on his account, into one or the other of the remaining two, as it is through the deeds and dispositions of our body that our moral and intellectual selves achieve expression; even words, after all, are physical occurrences; they are voiced, and voices have expressive qualities. As to whether the moral collapses into the intellectual, or the intellectual into the moral, Cousin is more vague. Sometimes he finesses the issue by referring to both of these as “spiritual,” thus granting preeminence to neither but making each a species of the one genus. Another locution which he employs frequently occurs in the following: “le beau est un, c’est le beau moral *ou* intellectuel” (VBB, 160).⁵⁷ The “or” here, especially since the point at issue is the unity of the beautiful, suggests that the two amount to roughly the same thing. And yet Cousin’s overall

⁵⁷ Emphasis mine.

philosophical commitments make it easier to view the intellect as being in service to our moral nature, rather than the two acting in complete independence of each other. His metaphysical inspiration, let us not forget, comes from Plato, for whom the form of the good irradiates all being, and from Leibniz, who deemed this to be the best of all possible worlds. Indeed, he himself remarks, in his *Philosophie écossaise*, that an expression theory, especially when it is concerned with explaining the beauty of nature, “s’allie admirablement à la théodicée.”⁵⁸ And on the connection between morality and beauty he remarks “voilà donc une fois Reid platonicien,”⁵⁹ adding that on this one issue at least Reid acknowledges as much.

The further Cousin proceeds in his engagement of aesthetic issues, in fact, the less he refers to the intellectual factor and the more the *idée morale* comes to dominate. Thus he writes “the capital element in beauty is the moral idea; the ideal differs from the real in that it draws that much closer to the moral idea” (VBB, 277). So naturally the aim of art is viewed in these same terms “to purify sufficiently the factors of unity and variety, in order that they may reflect as distinctly as possible the moral idea” (VBB, 278).

Actually he comes to speak of this *idée morale* as the common designation of all the arts, almost as if through different artists, different artistic styles, different artistic media and different eras there could be detected a single goal which each in its different way was striving to express. “Thus,” he concludes, “the moral idea identifies all the arts, while the form of expression [the medium] differentiates them” (VBB, 284). He then sketches a hierarchic ordering of the arts, as so many 19th century theorists were to do, based on the degree of effectiveness with which the medium special to each art form could express this *idée morale*.

Naturally—what man of letters has ever claimed otherwise?—Cousin deems poetry the supremely expressive art. “It is the art par excellence: it expresses beauty in a manner at once determinate and indeterminate, finite and infinite. Two or three words can suffice to excite the profoundest emotion in the soul. . . . The word is at once visible and invisible, material and immaterial” (VBB,

⁵⁸ Cousin, *Philosophie écossaise*, 423.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 425.

280). These are precisely the kinds of traits that should best conduce to bringing an invisible content to some form of material, sensible realization.

Most expressive, after the word, is melody. Cousin judges that music, while being able to move us greatly, does so “while altering least [least after poetry, anyway] the universal and infinite idea which we term beauty” (VBB, 282). Painting and sculpture are both obliged to render the versions of the *idée morale* in more concrete, recognizable terms—a particular person, object or scene. Therefore they bear a burden from which poetry and music are exempt.

Whatever the art form and its limitations, however, artists who practice within a certain medium are best advised, Cousin believes, to stay within the confines of that medium. Contrary to the *ut pictura poesis* dogma, “painting can not achieve what poetry can, nor can poetry achieve what painting can” (VBB, 289). Music should remain as absolute as possible and should not dilute its powers by attempting to tell stories or paint scenes: “if music is expressive, it expresses ideas, sentiments, but not shapes or faces” (VBB, 289). Undeniably, the greatest artistic efforts have been achieved when such advice has been heeded.

Though on certain issues here we find Cousin going into greater detail than Reid ever did, the overall imprint of Reid on the expressionist aspect of Cousin’s aesthetics is apparent. In each case—art, man, nature, even inanimate nature (so-called)—there is an interior which cannot present itself directly, but which does so through certain signs. These signs express the interior, and when we apprehend them, we proclaim the object exhibiting them to be beautiful. But we would not do so if we did not take them to be expressive of a spiritual state which itself merits the description beautiful. Reid’s distinction between original beauty (possessed by the spiritual interior) and derived beauty (attributed to the object) is unmistakably the source of Cousin’s thinking here.

Cousin identifies a number of tasks which no artist worthy of the name should undertake, and various attitudes which no one seeking to derive a true sense of the beautiful should import into the aesthetic experience. The desire for *possession*, for example, is declared antipathetic to the sense of beauty (VBB, 217-18). To gaze at a work in rapt contemplation is one thing; to wish to acquire it *for oneself* is quite another, and only the former sentiment is properly aesthetic.

Likewise the artist who places considerations of marketability above those of expressiveness would be engaging in a similar act of defilement. Utility is similarly contrary to aesthetic ends. To make and to appreciate something for a certain purpose is quite another matter from designing or appreciating it for its expressiveness. Useful things can of course be beautiful, and beautiful things useful, but their utility and their aesthetic appeal, so to speak, lead separate lives; the criteria appropriate to an object's function are held by Cousin to be separate from those that reveal its beauty. This, incidentally, does mark one clear point of departure from Reid, who allowed that utility can at times be perceived as beautiful, especially for the manner in which it discloses rationality in its application to the solving of problems. Finally, arousing particular emotions such as pity and terror, and likewise seeking out works of art for their ability to provoke such emotions is also a non-aesthetic endeavor. Indeed, "pity and terror, carried to too heightened a degree, stifle the sense of beauty" (VBB, 220).

It might take us aback at first confrontation, given all that has been said about the expression of the *idée morale* and the religious component in art, but Cousin likewise denies that art should aim to provide any moral edification or religious orientation. "Art is no more in service to religion and morality," he contends, "than it is in service to the agreeable or the useful; art is not an instrument, it carries its own proper end within itself" (VBB, 224). Thus we find enunciated in Cousin the doctrine which was to have such a profound influence on generations of subsequent aestheticians: "religion for the sake of religion, morality for the sake of morality and art for art's sake" (VBB, 224). And though, as with expressionism itself, he did not invent the doctrine, it was he who introduced it into French consciousness.

Cousin can hardly be blamed for the distorted aspect that "art for art's sake" came to wear. In proclaiming art's independence and its responsibility to itself he was not at all insisting on its irrelevance to life, its utter irrelevance to morality and religion, and he certainly was not urging his followers to pursue a life of aesthetic indulgence regardless of whether that led to conduct which would be deemed immoral or irreligious. Quite the contrary, the appreciation of beauty, as much so as the appreciation of truth and goodness, leads us directly to the absolute, to God. Pursuit of genuine beauty can

only be a morally uplifting and religiously fulfilling experience. But the route one follows to reach beauty is simply a different one from the route which leads to moral perfection or religious commitment: "painting, sculpture, music can cooperate in the production of moral or religious sentiments, but first they must produce the sentiment special to themselves, for the idea of beauty is irreducible to any other idea" (VBB, 225). Where these ideas do coalesce, of course, is in the absolute itself, which lies beyond the bounds of our experience. Art, therefore, can lead us to embrace religion and moral uprightness, but it cannot do so by posing these as ends to be achieved. The moment it sets any such ends which are extraneous to the pursuit of the expression of beauty for its own sake, these other ends will act to inhibit its own proper pursuit. As a result no such goals, however laudable they might appear, will be attained. Religious enlightenment and moral uprightness should be—but should only be—natural *consequences* of our love for beauty.

Despite his having promulgated an expressionist aesthetic, which was quite in step with his age—indeed it set the tone for his age—Cousin seems to have been largely indifferent to contemporary trends in literature and the other arts.⁶⁰ Although his early presentation of *Du vrai* may have come at a time when romanticism was not yet in full flower in France, still when he came to revise the work in the early 1850's he could well have included reference to Stendahl and Hugo (who, after all, seems to have borrowed one or two of Cousin's doctrines), Delacroix or Berlioz. Instead, we find him incorporating a chapter in this later version which focuses, not on French art of the nineteenth century, but instead on French art of the seventeenth century. There he finds "what we [i.e., he] prefer to

⁶⁰ Boas, focusing almost exclusively on Cousin's introduction of the concept of the ideal, wonders how it was that he came by the praise of such writers as Deschamps and Stendahl, the former judging that "the philosophic needs . . . of the century are admirably served by M. Cousin" (*Etudes françaises et étrangères*, (Paris: U.Canel, 1828), xxv), the latter lauding his "eloquent lessons," (*Racine et Shakespeare*, (Paris: Michel Lévy, frères, 1854), 65). The only conclusion Boas can reach is that Cousin's political liberalism must have been the factor which endeared him to them. It should by now be apparent, however, that there is enough in his expressionist aesthetics to have won the esteem of these romantic writers, even if their own works were not high up on Cousin's reading list.

everything else, grandeur united to good sense and reason, simplicity and force, genius of composition, especially that of expression."⁶¹

Amidst the praise for the writers, painters, and architects of that time is mingled no small amount of lamentation for the lack of respect their own countrymen had shown them at various times. Some of this is well taken, for it is true that much of the art which was portable managed to slip away from their grasp—if one does want to view the works of Claude Lorrain in any great quantity he would be better advised to travel to England or Italy to do so. Poussin also spent much time in Italy where it appears he was better appreciated. Cousin would only have looked with regret on the great amount of Impressionist art that was spirited away, especially to the U.S., before the French finally came to accept it themselves. Hyperbole abounds in this essay, however. For example, "we may distinguish P. Mignard, so much admired in his times, so little known now, and so worthy of being known. How have we been able to let fall into oblivion the author of the immense fresco of Val-de-Grace, so celebrated by Molière, which is perhaps the greatest page of painting in the world!"⁶²

Cousin's lamentations extend not just to what had come to be little regarded, but to what replaced the older styles, as well. Of the more recent architecture he asks "Since then, what has French architecture become? Once having left tradition and national character, it wanders from imitation to imitation, and without comprehending the genius of antiquity, it unskillfully reproduces its forms."⁶³ Of the Panthéon, he remarked "here, in spite of a mixture of the most different styles, it is evident that the Pagan style predominates. Christian worship cannot be naturalized in this profane edifice."⁶⁴

No criticism of Cousin's artistic preferences is intended here: the call to France to show greater respect for its artistic past was a legitimate one, and it is only to be regretted that it had to come so late. Similarly, immersing oneself in whatever trends are current can well lead to much wasted time and effort in pursuit of the evanes-

⁶¹ *Du vrai*, 209.

⁶² *Du vrai*, 236.

⁶³ *Du vrai*, 250.

⁶⁴ *Du vrai*, 252.

cent. It does seem interesting, however, that his taste in art was turned, as were his inclinations in metaphysics, toward a time that was not his own.⁶⁵

Here we have, then, the initial implantation of Reid's expressionist aesthetics in France. Much growth and development lies ahead, as we shall see, but a place of special importance must always be reserved for the initiator of a movement. Let us underscore a few salient aspects of Cousin's presentation of the theory before proceeding to a consideration of Jouffroy's version of it.

Expressionism retains, with Cousin, the theistic character with which Reid endowed it. Indeed if any transformation takes place from Reid to Cousin it is that theism is upgraded to theology, as Reid's simple faith is crystallized into a deduction of absolute being. But in both cases—Reid's divinity and Cousin's absolute—something spiritual is alleged to make itself manifest to human consciousness through natural signs. In both theories, likewise, reason provides the key to accounting for the universality of our judgments of beauty, though with Reid reason associates itself with first principles of taste while with Cousin it is allied to ideal beauty. And both theories have a fundamental moral tone about them, in linking (perceived) beauty with some (unperceivable) source of goodness.

⁶⁵ The same could be said for his taste in women. In his later years Cousin wrote lengthy, adoring volumes on great ladies of the seventeenth century—Mme de Chevreuse, Mme de Hautefort, Mme de Sablé, and his overwhelming favorite Mme de Longueville—knowing them through that passion that was specially his own, the passion for scholarship. Indeed, Taine teasingly offered as an epitaph for Cousin: "He founded a school of philosophy and he loved Mme de Longueville." Towards any viable contemporaries, however, he seems to have been relatively indifferent, even though it is common to find the man and his oratory lauded for their virility. Sainte-Beuve relates, "Cousin n'a jamais aimé ni bien connu les femmes. 'J'ai traversé tout cela comme des auberges,' me disait-il un jour. Ou plutôt, il ne me le disait pas, il me le criait en plein quai, en nous promenant, tellement qu'un passant se retourna." (*Les grands écrivains français par Sainte-Beuve*, classées et annotées par Maurice Allem (Paris: Librairie Garnier Frères, 1930), 385.) Perhaps it was for the better. Here is a sample of a billet doux which he sent to one woman with whom he did seem to have a relation of some sort: "Voulez-vous vendredi à deux heures? Nous causerions de philosophie et je vous remettrais Hemsterhuys, comme un souvenir de moi et un lien entre nous." (!) (Léon Séché, "Une amie de Cousin et de Lamartine, Mme Caroline Angebert," *La Revue* 17, (1 Sept. 1911): 12.)

Reid's and Cousin's versions of the expression theory share, in addition to these several attributes, a certain attitude, as well. Neither one seems all that wary of potential pitfalls the theory might encounter. Reid devotes the bulk of his argumentation toward confirming the propriety of attributing beauty to the beautiful object; he does not then proceed to erect a sturdy defense of expressionism. Cousin, as he accepts Reid's argumentation on the former issue, offers even less in the way of justification of his aesthetic views. Both thinkers do little more than *present* their views on beauty and expression. To some extent this is understandable and justifiable within their basic philosophical outlooks, for both contend that there are certain elements within our experience that occupy an ultimate position in any possible demonstrative chain, hence cannot themselves be demonstrated: Reid's first principles; Cousin's absolute ideas. And as we have seen, their respective aesthetic theories make ample use of these unquestionable (hence indemonstrable) elements. Reid feels no need, for example, to justify his claim that there is a language of natural signs—a little reflection, he believes, makes it evident that there couldn't even be a system of arbitrary signs (in terms of which a demonstration would be articulated) were there not some prior set of natural signs. This last contention at least is an argument *ad absurdum*, but still not a full fledged demonstration as Reid would understand that notion. And it does run headlong into the contention—not entirely unheard of in Reid's day—that even the so-called natural signs show a good bit of cultural determination, that is to say, arbitrariness.

It could also be asked, for example, how, if natural beauty is everywhere the expression of God's goodness, can we possibly account for natural ugliness? Neither Reid nor Cousin seems to trouble over this to any extent whatsoever. In short, then, some turbulent water lies ahead for the expression theory, but Cousin and Reid were charged only with steering her out of port and across a halcyon harbor. We will start to face up to some of the difficulties beginning next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

THEODORE JOUFFROY

Théodore Jouffroy and Victor Cousin were contemporaries for a few years at the Ecole normale, beginning in 1815. In these early years Jouffroy was a fervent admirer of Cousin, and although only four years his junior, Jouffroy was still the student and Cousin the instructor, and this master-disciple relationship persisted long after Jouffroy had assumed teaching duties of his own. Since it was in 1816 when Cousin first offered his course, "Du vrai, du beau et du bien," Jouffroy had to have been in attendance, and it is sure that he was for the 1818 version, as well.¹

It was in 1818 that Jouffroy began his teaching career at the Collège Bourbon, and according to his own accounts, he was quite unprepared for the task.² He accepted the responsibility, but apparently it proved something of a burden, for in 1820 he was obliged for reasons of health (and there were family considerations, as well) to abandon his teaching duties and to return to his home in the Jura mountains for two years. When he returned to Paris in 1822, he had lost his chair at the Collège Bourbon, and the Ecole normale had just been dissolved by the government. As a result, determined to teach, he carried on his instruction for some time to come in the privacy of his own apartment before a select group of auditors which included Philibert Damiron, Adolphe Garnier, Sainte-Beuve, Delorme, Dubois, Louis Vitet, and others. It was in such a framework as this that the course was offered from which the *Cours d'esthétique* resulted. Eventually he too was allowed to return to his chair, as Cousin had been, but his career was not a long one. Perhaps the fetid Parisian atmosphere weighed heavily on lungs that

¹ He provided a thumbnail sketch of the course to Philibert Damiron in a letter of August 8, 1818. The letter appears in *Correspondence de Théodore Jouffroy*, ed. Adolphe Lair (Paris: Perrin & Cie, 1901), 213.

² Jouffroy's confession to this appears in his *Nouveaux mélanges philosophiques* (Paris: Librairie Hachette et Cie, 1861), 95-100. All subsequent references to this work will be integrated into the text; the book will be referred to as NM, followed by the page number; thus: (NM, 95-100).

had been accustomed to breathing pure mountain air; in any case he died of consumption in 1842, in his forty-sixth year. Possessed of a gentle but sullen nature, Jouffroy projected an air quite contrary to the dynamic, flamboyant style of Cousin; one finds repeated reference to the look of deep sadness which seemed permanently impressed onto his countenance. His lectures involved no rhetorical outbursts, but instead appeared to emerge from him as introspective musings, the intense and relentless pursuit of an idea or topic to completion. He, too, like Cousin, succeeded in attracting a considerable following as a professor—although, quite unlike Cousin, he made very few enemies.

Jouffroy is perhaps best remembered for his vivid portrayal of a certain dark night in his youth when one by one he called into question the dogmas of his Catholic upbringing, until, when morning had come, all his convictions had been laid to waste and he found himself emotionally spent, devoid of conviction (NM, 81-85).³ Those who castigated him on this account as a religious skeptic apparently failed to read on to the end of the chapter, for some fifty pages later we find him confiding: "And when happier days came to the professor, the philosopher was oriented in his science; and the man whose faith had been shaken saw clearly what route had to be followed to recover the solution to the problem; and while seeking out this route, he had already encountered numerous convictions which enabled him to regain, if not his initial feeling of well-being, at least a certain peace of mind" (NM, 137). If all the intricacies of organized religion were thenceforth unacceptable to him, he fairly quickly found means to reaffirm a fundamentally theistic outlook, which he preserved throughout his life.

This theistic outlook is only one of many doctrines which Jouffroy shared with Reid; indeed there is little in his philosophy which is not directly traceable to the Scottish school. On those points where he does venture to adopt a position not straightforwardly discoverable in Reid, it usually turns out that he is just elaborating an issue brushed against but left undeveloped by the latter. His criticisms of commonsense philosophy are few in number, and are usually offered with extreme politeness and understanding—as if the

³ Important portions of this account can be found in William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Random House, 1902), 173-74.

Scottish master were somehow present, overseeing Jouffroy's work, on edge to take offense at any show of doctrinal infidelity. And—again unlike Cousin—he was not reluctant to declare his allegiance. He did, after all, translate Reid's works, so his indebtedness could be remarked by anyone who took the trouble to peruse these translations.

It is not difficult to come across passages in which Jouffroy proclaims his own independence as a thinker. In his *Cours d'esthétique*, for example, he declares "we thus cannot invoke the studies of other philosophers, our predecessors; we will have no guides or auxiliaries; we will have to march alone."⁴ And in a much later work, "Faits et pensées sur les signes," he writes "numerous treatises, lengthy works, even, exist on this topic. We have wanted neither to consult nor to read them, as . . . the ideas they might suggest to us would impede our own free thought, which likes to proceed according to its own fashion" (NM, 273). In all of this, however, it was too late for him not to have consulted Reid, and sure enough his treatment of these very matters follows Reid closely. In truth, it was his independence from Cousin he was asserting, and not his independence from Reid. Having attained to a certain station of academic life, he apparently grew weary of hearing himself categorized away as just another one of Cousin's proteges (and I suspect as the years drew on he grew weary of Cousin, too). He wished to lay claim to a territory all his own, at least among his French contemporaries, even if that involved sharing it with the ghost of an eighteenth-century Scotsman.

My analysis of Jouffroy in this chapter will proceed along the following lines. I will begin, in Part 1, with a consideration of the issues which indicate the proximity of Jouffroy's basic philosophical perspective to Reid's, and underscore what elements of the Scottish doctrine he emphasized. One issue is skepticism—that very *triebfeder* of commonsense philosophy—while the second concerns method—the introspective psychological method which Reid advocated and Jouffroy dutifully developed. In Part 2 I offer a detailed look at his aesthetic theory. His is the first, of the theories we are considering

⁴ Théodore Jouffroy, *Cours d'esthétique* (Paris: Librairie de L. Hachette, 1843), 2. All subsequent references to this work will appear in the text, with the book referred to as CE, followed by the page number; thus: (CE, 2).

here, to be developed in depth, hence to do justice to it will require a more extensive analysis than either Reid or Cousin received. In addition, I will consider closely some of the points about which serious objections could be, and were, raised, in order to appreciate how the expression theories of succeeding generations were designed so as to meet these objections.

1. *Reid's Influence*

1.1 *Skepticism and Commonsense*

If there were no skeptics there would likely be no commonsense philosophers. Granted that an idealist such as Berkeley also drew Reid's critical attention, still if there were no skeptics there would probably be no idealists, either; and of course skeptics and idealists alike generally start out from, or at some point make appeal to what Reid termed "the ideal system." Jouffroy is largely of the same mind as Reid on this issue, the issue which lays the foundation for their various other philosophical doctrines. There are slight points of discord between the two thinkers, however, and I will point them out where appropriate.

Doubt itself, Jouffroy contended, is a state of mind that arises naturally out of the human intellect. Animals lack the capacity to inquire about the reliability of their epistemic faculties, while God possesses only faculties that are in essence beyond reproach. It is we alone who possess both the power to come to know reality, and the awareness that this power has limitations. Nevertheless, it is one thing to know our limitations; it is quite another to regard our faculties as inherently deceptive, and although we can raise doubts, we also have means of allaying these doubts. "We believe . . . that in all or nearly all its applications, intelligence is subject to error, but this is precisely what we should not believe if we regarded it as naturally deceptive."⁵ Occasional or even frequent deception on the part of a capacity instead requires "that we should admit its natural

⁵ Théodore Jouffroy, *Mélanges philosophiques* (Paris: Librairie de Ladrangé, 1838), 215. All subsequent references to this work will appear in the text, with the book referred to as MP, followed by the page number; thus: (MP, 216).

veracity, and be able to ascertain by certain signs, the particular cases in which this natural veracity is abused" (MP, 215).

In perception, for example, we know perfectly well the precautions to take to insure veridicality, the ignoring of which will produce illusions and hallucinations. Since we know from experience that distance distorts both the form and color of objects, we view objects at close range for their true appearance. Many other precautions are necessary, such as standard lighting conditions and physiological fitness (drunkards are prone to hallucinate), etc., but, in any case, the sum of precautions constitutes the criterion according to which both veridical perceptions and illusions can be identified. Precautions in reference to memory, reasoning, and the other faculties also exist, and in each case they constitute the criteria for identifying what is veridical and what is not.

This natural veracity of our capacities which Jouffroy affirms is treated by him quite in the manner that Reid treated his first principles of commonsense: it constitutes the bedrock of human intelligence, and can in no way be confirmed through straightforward demonstration. Such demonstration, after all, would involved deduction from more fundamental principles—but there are none. "In fact, we can demonstrate nothing, except with our own intelligence; now, our intelligence cannot be admitted to demonstrate the veracity of our intelligence. . . . We therefore have and can have no proof of the fact . . . that human intelligence is not deceptive" (MP, 216). What else can be said, then, but that "an act of blind but irresistible faith is therefore the foundation of all belief" (MP, 217).⁶

The a priori status which Reid attributed to his first principles is accepted by Jouffroy with respect to this question of the natural veracity of our capacities, as it is on a variety of different points, as well. He saw it as the proper antidote to the passivity of mind thesis

⁶ George Boas, in his *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* article on Jouffroy, (Vol. 4, 293-94), imputes a most bizarre interpretation of "commonsense philosophy" to the latter, treating it as involving "the collective wisdom of the race." As we can see by underscoring Jouffroy's closeness to Reid, it refers instead to those principles which articulate the nativistic structure which the mind brings to its experience of the world. There is no "fusion of human souls" involved (whatever that might mean) except in the sense that we all share a common mental structure.

so often adduced by the British empiricists, and, closer to home, Condillac or Cabanis.

Jouffroy decried the central position assigned by western philosophy, at least since the time of Descartes, to the question of certainty, for it is the quest for rational certainty, he felt, which leads straightaway to skepticism, especially when the price of such certainty is bid up to a level which no one, not even mankind as a whole, can conceivably afford—the rational demonstration of the indemonstrable. To be sure, Jouffroy regarded certainty as a legitimate problem in philosophy, but he did not see it as requiring resolution prior to the meaningful pursuit of scientific inquiry. On the contrary, not only is it of no importance to the advancement of science, its very consideration can become an impediment to scientific progress. In short, Jouffroy contends, certainty is decidedly “not the first and most fundamental problem of philosophy, any more than the moral question or the aesthetic question.”⁷ His sentiments here echo Reid’s devaluation of discursive reason as the sole legitimate avenue to truth and his concomitant elevation of other faculties such as perception and memory. In a broader sense, of course, even perception and memory are constituents of reason. Jouffroy agrees that “what the Scots call first principles constitute human reason and provide for us the very rule for determining what is true and what should be believed” (RP, clxxxvi). And there are first principles which likewise pertain to perception, memory and other human mental capacities.

One point, however, at which Jouffroy deviated somewhat from Reid concerns the *absurdity* (alleged by Reid) of calling first principles into question (RP, clxxxvi-cxcix). Reid, it will be recalled,⁸ treated absurdity as a psychological defect not a logical one: the absurd is that which provokes ridicule. And to determine whether a contention such as calling a certain first principle into question was absurd, one need only trace out the consequences of the denial of that principle; soon, it could be shown, one would be

⁷ *Oeuvres complètes de Thomas Reid*, translated by Théodore Jouffroy, 6 vols. (Paris: Victor Masson, 1829-1836), I, clxxx (translator’s preface). All subsequent references to this work will appear in the text, with the book referred to as RP, followed by the page number; thus: (RP, clxxx).

⁸ See above, Chap. 1, Sect. 1.1.

asserting *ridiculous things*. Jouffroy, however, seeing that many, if not most philosophers across the centuries had in fact called into question one or another of these principles, was reluctant to brand a significant portion of the entire philosophic tradition as an exercise in absurdity. Reid, of course, felt no such reluctance, and would probably have instructed Jouffroy in this fashion: "If you would pay closer attention to what I said, *and to what you accept*, you would realize that these ultimate questions of which you speak are not, properly speaking, even questions. They are but strings of words cast in the interrogative mode."

And in truth, Jouffroy did not for a moment believe that the doubting of a first principle could ever lead to its being overturned and replaced by some other heretofore unacknowledged principle. As we just noted above, he regarded these principles as constitutive of human reason (in the broad sense). I suspect, therefore, that the essence of Jouffroy's position here is not so much (as he puts it) that questioning first principles should not be regarded as an absurd exercise, but rather (as he should have put it) that occasional confrontations with absurdity are healthy, inasmuch as they can only lead to a reaffirmation, with renewed confidence, of the very principles one saw fit to question.

There are instances in which Jouffroy does speak of "absolute truth"—what student of Cousin's could wholly refrain from this—but his remarks are generally more tempered than Cousin's. "Absolute truth" itself, after all, is not to be identified with "the absolute." He distinguishes at one point between absolute truth and "human truth," asserting that the first principles of commonsense exercise dominion only over the latter. This seems only to say, however, that there are truths known to God but not to man, a contention Reid could have lived with happily enough. Somewhat stronger is the claim that "every act of belief implies the conviction in him who believes that he participates, to a certain degree, in absolute truth" (MP, 211), a contention which, Jouffroy substantiates by reasoning as follows: "To believe is to consider a certain idea as true; to consider a certain idea as true, is to judge that it is in conformity with reality; now every idea in conformity with reality, is a portion of absolute truth" (MP, 212). The first two assertions in this latter quotation seem unobjectionable, and while we might even accept the third for the sake of argument, it is not sufficient to establish the thesis in

question, for the notion of "conviction" has fallen away. That every act of belief implies *participation*, to some degree, in absolute truth is all Jouffroy's reasoning can warrant, but such participation can occur without the conviction that one is so participating. Reid would likely have accepted this weaker conclusion which Jouffroy's argument supports, but would not have accepted the stronger one which Jouffroy purports to have established.

Interestingly, where Jouffroy does see fit to qualify the absolute, or God, he makes explicit that this is not mere metaphysical adventurism, but that it has firm precedent in *Scottish philosophy itself*. The Scots, he claims, "established in great breadth and with perfect conviction the principal dogmas of natural religion. And note that these dogmas are not limited just to the existence of God, but they extend to his nature, and affirm of this nature . . . that it is simple, . . . intelligent, . . . immaterial, . . . all powerful, . . . just, etc." And in so doing, "they believed themselves to be proceeding scientifically, and not surpassing the limits of human intelligence, . . . [reasoning] from what appears to what is presupposed by what appears" (RP, cxiv-cxv).

One further matter which should be touched on in this section is that of empirical realism, the ontological ground to Reid's refutation of skepticism. Jouffroy accepts this position quite readily. We find him, for example, in his essay "Du spiritualisme et du matérialisme," praising commonsense philosophy for "admitting as true both what we sense within ourselves and what we perceive outside ourselves, [and thus capturing] body and soul at once, that is, the real world in its entirety" (MP, 186). To avoid any misunderstanding here, it should be noted that the term "*spiritualisme*," as it is used in the above title, closely approximates what we normally refer to as idealism. Thus there is a spiritualist element in Locke and Descartes, coexisting uncomfortably alongside their materialist attitudes. The sense of "spiritualism" which Cousin later applied to his own system is quite different in significance from this, as in Cousin's sense, Reid himself qualified as a spiritualist, while in Jouffroy's he clearly would not. In this same essay, Jouffroy puts forward the commonsense critique of Descartes and especially of Locke who "internalized" perception in claiming, as they did, that what we directly perceive are ideas, thus rendering our knowledge of the external world hopelessly problematic (MP, 188-92).

Most of Jouffroy's reflections on philosophical method, in fact, embody a realist persuasion without ever troubling to argue in support of it. Thus, for example, in "De l'organisation des sciences philosophiques," while reflecting on whether reductionistic investigation has any natural limits, he asserts that "we have the right to demand that each science represent a subdivision of reality which itself is real and not at all imaginary; but as to the extent of this subdivision, theory can assign no limits" (NM, 15). And later on he suggests "the primitive division and the more detailed one are simultaneously true; the exactitude of the one in no way contradicts that of the others" (NM, 33). At times he struggles with terminology in a manner suggestive of an idealist perspective. Thus he states in one instance that "the idea is in us only as a reminder and *image* of the reality we have seen, it *represents* it; . . . the idea is but a *phantom*" (MP, 182-83),⁹ all of this occurring in a section where he aims to be supportive of the commonsense position. But it is only fair to note that even Reid, especially in his *Inquiry*, slides back into this manner of speaking from time to time. It is hard to overthrow an entire philosophical tradition of which one has been a part without an occasional touch of recidivism. In brief, then, Jouffroy's proximity to Reid on both epistemological and ontological matters is easily remarked, and even the occasional (questionable) intrusion into "illegitimate" ontological territories is not so abrupt as to strain his relationship with the Scot.

1.2 *Psychology*

It was the psychological dimension to commonsense philosophy that Jouffroy and his successors seem to have regarded as its central and definitive characteristic, and it is there that Jouffroy made his most salient contributions to the tradition. Consequently, when one comes across any reference in French literature of the time to the Scottish school or the Scottish method, the overwhelming likelihood is that the writer has in mind not so much a realist ontology or a priori epistemology, as simply an introspective approach to psychology.

Jouffroy wrote extensively on the subject of philosophical and psychological method, to the extent that he grew accustomed to being

⁹ Emphasis mine.

criticized for devoting too much of his efforts to methodological considerations, and not nearly enough to the actual application of those methods in the interest of furthering science itself. He acknowledged the criticism but offered no apologies, suggesting instead that philosophy, having made very little headway in resolving its central problems over the previous two thousand years, would be better served by looking carefully at how we should best proceed in this direction, than it would by simply bringing forward precipitously just one more set of half truths. He would have us remember that it was introspection, carefully and properly performed by Reid, which brought to light the a priori dimension to human experience. A method capable of producing such momentous results deserves to be formalized and codified.

Addressing, then, the proper means by which any science is to be constituted and organized, Jouffroy offers the following suggestion: "A science," he claims, "is constituted when it has a true and precise idea of its object, that is to say, of what distinguishes it from any other science . . . when it can offer a precise response to the question 'by what sign do you distinguish an inquiry that belongs to you from one that doesn't'" (NM, 48). He then offers two conditions that govern the organization of such a science. First, it should have "a true and precise idea of the principal real divisions of its object;" and secondly, "it should have a true and precise idea of what method is to be followed to resolve the questions that pertain to this object" (NM, 49).

Jouffroy regarded Bacon as the thinker responsible for having set scientific investigation on the right path. Clearly when science divorced itself from mere conjecture and hypothesis and became wedded to observation it placed itself in a position to make significant advances. And the simple fact that it did progress so far in such a relatively short span of time confirms the worthiness of the inductive method. But natural science concerned itself with physical reality. It urged that we direct our powers of observation toward the external world, and draw our inferences about matters of physical fact. Such was indeed the way science was conducted during its first few centuries, and we were obliged to wait, on Jouffroy's view, until Thomas Reid appeared before Baconian methods were at last applied to the mental realm, the domain of consciousness.

True, there were intimations of such an approach prior to Reid. Descartes certainly gave some attention to his own private consciousness, but Descartes' foremost concern was with natural science—the science of the external realm. Consciousness as such had a dual significance for him: on the one hand it provided, in certifying an individual's existence, the firm foundation that the science of nature required; but on the other hand it was regarded as problematic—a prison from which we must escape if we are to make any sound use of the foundation it provided. Neither Reid nor Jouffroy saw any considerable interest on the part of Descartes in establishing and developing a science of consciousness *per se*.

Locke seems to merit some credit for advancing the cause of psychology, as he declares at the very beginning of his *Essay* that

since it is understanding that sets man above the rest of sensible beings . . . it is certainly a subject . . . worth our labours to enquire into. The understanding . . . requires art and pains to set it at a distance, and make it its own object. But whatever be the difficulties that lie in the way of this enquiry, sure I am that all the light we can let in upon our own minds . . . will . . . bring us great advantage in directing our thoughts in the search of other things. (I, I, 1)

But, Jouffroy believed, Locke went too far astray too often to receive any appreciable credit as the founder of the science of psychology. For one thing, he focused on *ideas* as the relevant desiderata, and surely, Jouffroy believed, if I know of such disparate “entities” as the tree in my yard, the chair that I sit on, the pain in my leg, and the power I possess to make that pain increase or diminish by moving my leg in one way or another, all through the medium of certain ideas I have in mind, then the very distinction between consciousness and the external world—a distinction essential to the very constitution of psychology as a science—is bound to be profoundly obscured. Secondly, Locke was far from rigorous and consistent in his employment of the introspective method; and thirdly he conducted his investigations principally with an eye to resolving certain traditional philosophical problems. As Jouffroy would have it, we should develop psychology independently of the philosophical problems its findings might help us to resolve. Only when the science has a certain integrity of its own should we “apply . . . the torch of psychology to the monuments of philosophy” (MP, 234).

Accordingly, "the great service which the Scottish school rendered to the science of the mind, and consequently to all philosophy," Jouffroy claims, was that "they separated, in the order of the philosophical sciences, the study of facts, from the questions whose solution was to follow from this study" (RP, lxxxii).

The facts which, according to Jouffroy, are relevant to the science of psychology are those which arise and dwell exclusively within the domain of consciousness. These facts "are no less real, no less incontestable in the view of intelligence, than sensible facts, though of a different nature, and [their] laws . . . can be determined in the same manner, and verified with the same certainty."¹⁰ While this may be true, it is undeniable that the facts which Jouffroy has in mind are in important respects very special—perhaps we could say even unique—since the other sciences, those we think of as the natural sciences, involve applying our intelligence to one feature or another of the world itself—the world which stands apart from this intelligence. There is certainly something very "natural" about this, as man is and has long been accustomed, for the very purposes of survival, to direct his consciousness toward phenomena outside of himself. It is only very recently in our history—and very rarely, at that—that we have come to direct our attention inwardly. But it is only phenomena of this latter sort that fall within the province of psychology, for it is the only science "whose instrument and whose object are identical" (MP, 248).

A second difference between psychology and the natural sciences, connected with the first, is that we don't—and can't—observe ourselves in quite the same manner as we observe external objects. It is correct to say, rather, that we are *conscious* of our own inner states. Indeed, we can even be conscious of our own consciousness, but there is always an immediacy involved in such an awareness—there is never any question of distance between ourselves and our objects when we are objects unto ourselves.

Granted these points of differentiation, though, Jouffroy is more concerned to smooth over any seemingly sharp demarcation between

¹⁰ Théodore Jouffroy, *Philosophical Essays*, trans. by George Ripley (Edinburgh: Thomas Clerk, 1839), 5. This and the next two citations from this work are from a translation of Jouffroy's introduction to his own translation of the works of Dugald Stewart.

psychology and the other sciences, and to argue instead that the method of inquiry advocated by Bacon is every bit as relevant to psychology as it is to the physical sciences. Some serious attention needs of course to be given to the matter of communication and the intersubjective verifiability of facts uncovered through introspection, but Jouffroy believes that any problems that might arise in this area are, with care, resolvable, and that without imposing "your own consciousness on your hearers or readers, you [can] lead them to gain the same knowledge that you have yourself, and in the same manner that you have gained it, namely, by the analysis of a confused notion which they had in their minds as well as you."¹¹ And he goes on to wonder, "is the process of communication and proof in the natural sciences free from these difficulties?"¹²

To add further precision to the domain proper to psychology, Jouffroy distinguishes (after Cousin, after Biran and others) between the self (*moi*) and the non-self (*non-moi*), and proclaims that psychology is exclusively the science of the self. Specifying what he means by "self," then, is our next task. And it is not a simple one. Jouffroy uses several different terms as synonyms for *moi*: sometimes he speaks of *le principe intelligent*, sometimes he calls psychology the science of man; in other places he treats soul (*âme*) and mind (*esprit*) as synonymous to one another and to the self, as well. The non-self naturally includes the rest of the material world outside of and apart from ourselves. We are aware of this world, it provides us with sensations, and these sensations form part of the mental realm even as they inform us of their non-mental origins. But beyond this, Jouffroy also classifies as the non-self a person's body, and all the involuntary functions which collaborate to enable it to survive. Thus when he calls psychology the science of man, he does not have in mind the *whole* individual organism, body and soul in concert. Instead, "there are in this compound two distinct things: the *man*, properly speaking, and the *animal*. Physiology studies the animal, psychology the man" (MP, 247).¹³

¹¹ *Philosophical Essays*, 27.

¹² *Ibid.*, 30.

¹³ This reveals yet another point on which Boas' interpretation of Jouffroy strays far from the truth. Boas says "As early as 1827 he showed an interest in society as a being having its particular influence on the individuals who compose it" (*Encycl.*

In an essay entitled "Des facultés de l'âme humaine," Jouffroy indicates six general faculties, certain of which permit of further subdivision. It is most expedient simply to quote at length from this essay.

First the *personal faculty*, or the supreme power of taking possession of ourselves and of our capacities, and of controlling them; this faculty is known by the name of *liberty* or *will* Secondly the primitive inclinations of our nature, or that aggregate of instincts or tendencies that impel us towards certain ends . . . and at once suggest to reason the destiny of one's being, and animate our activity to pursue it. Thirdly, the *locomotive faculty*, or that energy by means of which we . . . produce all the voluntary movements. Fourthly, the *expressive faculty*, or the power of representing by external signs that which takes place within us. . . . Fifthly, *sensibility*, or the capacity of being agreeably or disagreeably affected by all external or internal causes. . . . Sixthly, the *intellectual faculties*. This term comprises many distinct faculties. (MP, 349-50)

From all he says of these six faculties, it would appear that the first—will—should be set apart from and above the rest, for he takes pains to show how each of the other five is infused with the power of willing—our inclinations are directed, as are our voluntary movements, as are our expressive gestures, and so forth. Elsewhere, as well, he observes "the first thing which appears clearly to me, when I seek to determine just what I am, is that I always find myself acting in a certain manner" (MP, 255), and he goes on to characterize the *moi* as "that which acts." This feature of Jouffroy's psychology bears the imprint of Maine de Biran, who himself stressed the pervasiveness of will in our concept of the self. Even here, though,

of Phil., vol. 4, 294). But if anything, Jouffroy's interests lay in a diametrically opposite direction: it is the self, the *moi*, which constitutes his principal obsession, and even when he speaks of *la science de l'homme*—a science which for many others would take a sociological turn—he says "what is man, other than that which each of us calls 'moi'?" (MP, 247; emphasis mine). In short, he was much more inclined to view society as a *collection* of individuals than as a phenomenon which *determined* individual behavior. It can be seen also in his writings on human destiny how the question of the destiny of man collapses into that of the destiny of the individual man. Jouffroy was not wholly indifferent to questions concerning society, but they do stand well down on his list.

Jouffroy remains in line with Reid's outlook, as Reid, it will be remembered, regarded mind as the only principle of activity, hence whatever causality we witness in nature would have to be traceable to some divine impetus, and the only events genuinely produced by creatures here in our world are those produced by human agency.

To what extent, on Jouffroy's view, does activity permeate consciousness? It does have a certain involuntary dimension about it, a certain passivity: when we open our eyes we don't see simply and entirely what our will would have us see. However, this primitive, involuntary aspect of our experience "is always obscure, and only becomes clear upon analysis . . ." (MP, 253), and such analysis never occurs spontaneously, without some measure of direction from the self. Jouffroy asserts quite bluntly that "human intelligence . . . never attains, without the intervention of will, a clear understanding of things" (MP, 252), and he is not here contending that only those engaged in a study of mind and its contents reach a clear understanding of things, for he accompanies this assertion with the claim that the "science of the self is thus initiated in the consciousness of each and every man" (MP, 252).

Even as a person sleeps, Jouffroy believed, his soul remains active and vigilant. In his essay "Du sommeil" he argues that it is only the senses which become torpid, although even certain of them, at certain times, communicate sensations, however obscure these might be, to the soul, which assesses them and acts, if need be. Even the act of awakening is seen in this fashion to have a distinct voluntary component about it (MP, 308). Accordingly, Jouffroy refers to the body as an *agrégation matérielle*, and denies of it any active power. Those organs which seem to act from their own impetus, or at least from no explicit voluntary impulse, are better regarded as media through which a certain *force vitale* operates. And if these two elements—body and life force—tend to mix and intermingle during life in ways that obscure their distinct natures, the phenomenon of death, he believes, serves to underscore this distinctness. For in death, "these two elements withdraw from one another; the bodily matter remains, but life disappears; the molecules which composed the one remain, while the phenomena which constituted the other vanish" (NM, 168). Jouffroy does not venture to explain how or where the life force goes; he is only concerned to observe *that* it goes. This life force is separate and distinct from the

soul or self, though the two are obliged to operate in tandem: "things are arranged in a manner such that the vital force cannot proceed toward its end without the intervention of the self, while the self in turn, in order to attain its own ends, has need of the vital force" (NM, 181).

As to whether the two forces are in some manner united in a single substance—referring here to their metaphysically substantial nature, and not to the more obvious fact that they interact within the same physical body—this question, Jouffroy believed, is unanswerable from the human or scientific perspective. He does not rule out the possibility, but he also reminds us that "it is entirely possible that all natural phenomena are produced by the immediate action of God" (NM, 171). The *force vitale* thus might be an intermediary power through which God acts, or it might be God himself; or presumably there are other possibilities—several layers of intermediary forces or the like. Jouffroy rules out none of these scenarios; all he rules out is that the human body—that aggregate of matter which coheres and disperses—has any power whatsoever to act on its own.

There is nothing in this dualism which is not perfectly in keeping with Reid's views on these matters. But Jouffroy does go a step or two further in elaborating the position principally because the march of science, in the half century that had intervened between Reid and himself, was ever more strongly threatening to materialize mind and assimilate psychology, as they understood it, to physiology. Indeed, most of the above quotes have been taken either from Jouffroy's essay "De la légitimité de la distinction de la psychologie et de la physiologie," in which he goes to considerable lengths to rebut the pretensions of the physiologists, or from his "De l'organisation des sciences philosophiques," in which many of the same points are reaffirmed. And as always, he is not reluctant to admit the source of his ideas; thus near the end of the expository section of the latter essay he remarks "commonsense, which affirms the duality of human nature, and science which recognizes it in its division of the study of man, are therefore justified" (NM, 185).

In a few words, then, psychology involves the study of the self, or soul, through an examination of the contents of our consciousness, understanding this latter term in the manner delineated over the past several pages. The method appropriate to this study is that of introspection, as opposed to observation, but beyond that difference,

the principles of Baconian induction are every bit as relevant to psychology as to natural science.

In his essay, "Du problème de la destinée humaine," the philosophical problem which attracted him more than any other, he suggests, "To know if one existed before, and will continue to exist after this life . . . there are but two realities to interrogate: first, man's nature; second, his destiny in this life." In other words, "to penetrate the mystery of these two portions of our destiny which escape us, the only means, obviously, is to examine that portion which we can know, that is, man's destiny in this world" (MP, 460). And when Jouffroy does come to examine this knowable portion of our being, it turns out that it is in the moral life where answers to the question of human destiny emerge: "the question: In what do good and evil consist? is in its turn identical to this other: What is our destiny in this world?" (MP, 472). In short, then, the moral domain was of the utmost importance to Jouffroy, and psychology was viewed by him as being able to shed valuable light on this domain (and whatever light it does shed there spills over, as has just been mentioned, into the two regions to which we have no direct access—those bordering our terrestrial life).

It has been important to highlight Jouffroy's psychology because it (1) provides a look at another point of general concurrence between his thinking and Reid's, (2) constitutes the area of commonsense philosophy which he was most concerned with developing and (as we have just seen) extending, and (3) represents the method which he relentlessly employed in elaborating his aesthetic theory. And as the relation between the spiritual interior of man and of nature is central to this theory, it has been essential to come to a precise understanding of how Jouffroy viewed this relationship. Let us now examine his aesthetics in depth.

2. *Aesthetic Theory*

While Jouffroy felt most strongly the need to supply answers to questions of morality, the realm of art and beauty remained an area for which he always had a singular fascination. As his friend Philibert Damiron confirms in his introduction to the *Cours d'esthétique*, "he [Jouffroy] had always loved [the study of beauty]; he had taken it as the subject of his thesis . . . and he ceaselessly

returned to it" (CE, xv).¹⁴ The text of this *Cours* is based on notes taken by certain auditors—principally Delorme—before whom Jouffroy presented his lectures on aesthetics. These notes were collected and edited by Damiron after Jouffroy's death. While the work does not bear the stamp of approval of the author (few posthumous publications do!), nevertheless there seem to be no striking incompatibilities between it and any other of his known works. And of course it is this work and not the actual lectures themselves which influenced all but a handful of subsequent thinkers. We might expect, also, that any glaring errors in the transcription would have been signaled by one or another of the auditors (surely Sainte-Beuve would not have missed out on an opportunity to criticize someone), but none, to my knowledge, ever did so. Had Jouffroy found the time to rework this transcription into smooth prose the result would surely have been one of the definitive works in aesthetics from the nineteenth century. As it stands, we can laud its fecundity but must lament its stylistic infelicities.

What Jouffroy presents is a theory of beauty. In so doing, his ideas are clearly guided by Reid's on the same topic, although it is interesting to note that he doesn't merely recapitulate Reid's whole aesthetic agenda. His choice of issues and the order they follow upon one another appear actually to adhere more closely to Cousin's treatment. Fundamental questions of objectivity and universality which were of the utmost important to Reid, and which have surfaced again and again in the last century, receive next to none of Jouffroy's attention.

Yet for Jouffroy, as for Cousin,¹⁵ overlooking such questions implied no indifference toward them; still less that any distance was opening up between themselves and Reid. If anything, the opposite was the case and Jouffroy saw himself as providing the complement that Reid's theory needed. There was, he felt, nothing to be said on the question of objectivity beyond what Reid had already said, so Jouffroy briefly acknowledges Reid's arguments, concludes "*cela prouvé*," and goes on to consider the question of the beautiful—a question which he believed Reid treated only as accessory to the

¹⁴ The thesis referred to, *Le Sentiment du beau est différent du sublime; ces deux sentiments sont immédiates*, is included as an appendix to his *Cours*, 325-63.

¹⁵ See above, Chap. 2, introductory remarks to Part 3.

principal issue of objectivity (CE, 117). It was thus only appropriate that he, Jouffroy, should accord the same depth of treatment to the beautiful that Reid accorded to objectivity, and Jouffroy is quick to indicate his indebtedness to Reid for having pointed out the route to follow in explaining beauty (though he does so with the same curious lefthanded formulation which we saw Cousin employ,¹⁶ saying “this opinion of Reid’s bears a great resemblance to the opinion which we have presented concerning the beautiful” (CE, 17). In short, Jouffroy seems to have thought that Reid had taken care of the higher level theoretical questions and pointed the way to a proper treatment of the beautiful; now it was his turn to pursue in depth this latter issue.

Jouffroy’s method was to examine in minute detail those experiences we deem aesthetic, from the moment we first confront a certain object or spectacle to that point at which we judge it to be beautiful (or ugly, or pretty, etc.). His *Cours* in fact provides probably his most sustained employment of the introspective method—“one of the best specimens of Jouffroy’s psychology,” in the words of a biographer, Ollé-Laprune.¹⁷ It is hoped that the following analysis will confirm this judgment.

I have divided this analysis of Jouffroy’s aesthetics into six sections. First I give consideration to the concept of “disinterested pleasure,” one of the hallmarks of our experience of the beautiful on his account. Then I proceed (as did Jouffroy) to examine some of the things which beauty is *not* (but has been taken to be, at various times). This leads naturally to an account of what beauty *is*, an account which introduces “expression” and “the invisible” into his theory. Fourthly, I look at the natural signs through which it is alleged that the invisible expresses itself. Fifthly, I explore a notion which plays a central role in Jouffroy’s treatment of aesthetic response, that of *sympathy*. And finally, I offer some critical reflections on expressionism in general up to this point in its development, as well as on Jouffroy’s particular version of it.

¹⁶ See above, Chap. 2, introductory remarks to Part 1.

¹⁷ Léon Ollé-Laprune, *Théodore Jouffroy* (Paris: Perrin & Cie, 1899), 112.

2.1 “Disinterested Pleasure”

Jouffroy sets out from the tame enough observation that the apprehension of something beautiful is normally accompanied by a certain feeling of pleasure (although as the work proceeds, he speaks increasingly of a positive or a pleasant *emotional* experience, coming thereby closer to Reid’s “agreeable emotion” (CE, 2)); hardly a theoretician up to his time and after it would have claimed otherwise. We are pleased, however, by many different things and by many different types of things, and inevitably the quality of the pleasure will vary from thing to thing and from type to type. The first important step toward comprehending beauty, then, is to determine what sets the pleasure we experience in the presence of beautiful things apart from any other pleasure we might enjoy.

Jouffroy’s answer to this question is that when an object pleases us in a strictly aesthetic manner, it does so without serving any of our worldly needs, without contributing to the fulfillment of any individual goals, or without gratifying any of our human passions. Our pleasure is, in a word, *disinterested*; the object of our pleasure is, in another word, useless.

Disinterestedness is one of two principle elements in Jouffroy’s aesthetics which find no definite precedent in Reid (the other being “sympathy,” which I examine in Section 2.5). Cousin did appeal to the notion in his lectures *Du vrai*, and quite likely this constituted the most proximate source for Jouffroy. Of course it is Shaftesbury who is normally credited with having first formulated the concept, but Kant was the first thinker to make extensive, systematic use of it (though he generally employed the phrase *ohne Interesse*—without interest). Hence Kant, in all likelihood, stands as the ultimate source for both Jouffroy and Cousin. In addition, the vigor of Jouffroy’s argumentation on this issue suggests that there was a strong contemporary adversary, someone whose position required definitive refutation. I suspect that this would have been A. H. Kératry, whose aesthetic theorizing was somewhat in vogue in France in the early 1820s, for Kératry depicts a strong link between beauty and utility.¹⁸

¹⁸ See, for example, his *Examen philosophique des “Considérations sur le sentiment du sublime et du beau . . .” d’Emmanuel Kant* (Paris: Bossange Frères, 1823).

Now merely being useless, of course, is hardly going to count as a sufficient condition for an object to be beautiful. There are numberless objects in the world which are of no use to us and toward which we are totally—and justifiably—indifferent. “How is it, then, that the beautiful, which is utterly useless (*qui est l’inutile*), is not unimportant? Herein lies the miracle of beauty, its secret, its mystery” (CE, 26). But it is not to be forgotten that this uselessness is detected accompanying a pleasure which we feel. It is not that we examine an object for its utility and, finding none, proclaim it to be beautiful—rather, we are pleased by the object to the point of pronouncing it beautiful; then we come to realize that it has pleased us without doing anything for us in any “worldly” way. A sense of an object’s uselessness thus turns out to be a necessary concomitant of but surely no sufficient condition for our judgments of beauty.

Jouffroy does not mean to suggest that only useless items can be found beautiful, for many a highly useful device is deemed beautiful, and rightly so. As he puts it,

It is not the case that the feeling that something is useful excludes forever the feeling that it is beautiful; nor is it the case that once a thing is judged to be useful it can never be judged to be beautiful, nor that once something is judged to be beautiful it can never be judged to be anything but beautiful. However, the feeling that something is beautiful stifles, at the very moment it comes into being, the feeling that something might be useful. (CE, 27)

And of course our concern with an object’s utility will likewise crowd out our sense of its beauty.

Jouffroy argues long and cogently to establish this opposition between beauty and utility (through Chapters 3-5), basing most of his argumentation, expectedly, on close observation of the differences in our attitudes toward beautiful things as opposed to useful things. It bears remarking, also, that on this issue as well as on a number of others Jouffroy is disposed to derive a characterization of our attitudes from the language we normally employ in reacting to and describing beautiful (or useful) things. While I contended in Chapter 1 that Reid is *not* to be taken as an ordinary language philosopher, I suggest that Jouffroy comes much closer to being one, for indeed in many instances he appears to take the dictates of ordinary language as sufficient to establish or reject certain philosophical posi-

tions. He accepts, for example, the distinctions which define the various categories of aesthetic interest—beauty, sublimity, the pretty, the agreeable—strictly on the grounds that “all languages distinguish several species of beauty . . .” (CE, 6), and allows his thinking to be guided by “what we call beautiful” (CE, 80).¹⁹ Similar instances occur in his *Cours* and in other works. We will touch on a couple in the course of this analysis. With Reid, as we have seen, there was generally a first principle of commonsense standing nearby, constituting the ultimate justification for acceptance or rejection; with Jouffroy, this is not obviously the case.

Still, even with Jouffroy instances arise in which he finds it necessary to polish up the language a bit and recommend a “rigorous” (philosophically adequate) sense of a term over various other loose or everyday senses. And “beauty” just happens to be one such term. The loose sense of “beauty” seems merely to pick out objects capable of producing disinterested pleasure, and while genuinely beautiful objects do produce such pleasure, not all objects producing such pleasure are genuinely beautiful. Certain properties of these latter objects might be said, then, to contribute to their beauty, loosely speaking, without in fact being *essential* conditions for beauty *strictly* speaking. Jouffroy enumerates as principal among these properties novelty, custom, order and proportion, direct imitation and idealized imitation.²⁰ In order to establish which sense of “beauty” is the adequate one, and to demonstrate where the other senses come up short, Jouffroy formulates a two-part argumentative strategy.

First, he would have it granted that in many instances beauty—true beauty—is often found in the company of one or more of the above-mentioned properties. Thus when we proclaim something which we find to be novel or a fine imitation to be beautiful it is understandably unclear where the novelty or the excellence of the imitation leaves off and the beauty begins, or indeed that there is any essential separation between the concepts at all. And it is beyond

¹⁹ For a more thorough discussion of this issue see Edward H. Madden and James W. Manns, “Théodore Jouffroy’s Contributions to the Commonsense Tradition,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 25 (October 1987): 575-77.

²⁰ Jouffroy actually uses the term “imitation” for what I call here “direct imitation,” while what he calls “idealization” I refer to as “idealized imitation.”

doubt that this lack of clarity is responsible for many a misdirected theory. As a second step, Jouffroy urges acceptance of the principle that true beauty has as its opposite, ugliness, and if we accept this essential opposition it should follow, he believes, that the aspect responsible for making an object beautiful would, if altered or distorted in certain crucial respects, render the same object ugly. Beauty and ugliness, in being fundamentally opposed in this fashion, must share a common ground—a view which is as old and as basic as any in philosophy.

At this juncture Jouffroy's reasoning bifurcates and heads down a negative and a positive path. Negatively, he sets out to show that the various illegitimate pretenders to the crown of true beauty can be exposed for what they are by demonstrating that certain objects can be referred to as beautiful, in one or another of the inadequate senses, *and* as ugly, thus illustrating that the particular sense of beauty in question is not the ultimate, philosophically adequate sense. Positively, he reasons that since beauty and ugliness do share a common ground, then if it should prove more expedient in certain circumstances to isolate the whereabouts of the ugly, one would at the same time succeed in locating the beautiful. Let us observe, first, how certain of the alternative (inadequate) theories of beauty succumb to this line of reasoning, then see how their very failure points the way to the correct theory.

2.2 *What Genuine Beauty Isn't*

The first time we entered a great cathedral, heard a certain melody, glimpsed the Mediterranean from the palisades above, there might well have been a special flavor to the experience which subsequent efforts failed to recapture. This special something consisted in the *novelty* of the experiences in question, and such novelty can, under the right circumstances, please us.²¹ However, examples spring to mind with equal ease and rapidity of confrontations with the new which nevertheless left us only with an impression of ugliness: the

²¹ These are examples compatible with the sense of novelty which Jouffroy adopts—the same inadequate sense that Reid employed—in which the term signifies “new-to-me.” Jouffroy is similarly indifferent to the other sense which involves the relation between an object (normally an artwork, but it could apply to any invention, scientific hypothesis or the like) and its proximate past.

first time I ever came across a fatal automobile accident, the first time I ever stumbled upon a swarm of termites. Thus there is no impropriety in speaking of something as novel *but ugly*, and this would be true of novelty in either its subjective or its objective mode. Clearly, there would be no difficulty in finding examples which led to the same conclusion with respect to the conventional or the traditional.

A more interesting case is supplied by the concepts of order and proportion, since they are more often cited in explanations of the beautiful. The exact significance of these terms, however, is not crystal clear, and Jouffroy considers a variety of possibilities before ultimately arriving at the one he takes to be definitive, namely, "the suitability of means to their proper end; the correspondence of what a thing is to what it ought to be" (CE, 51). Such a definition would apply to artifacts as well as to discrete organisms, so we could inquire whether things as diverse as a hammer and a horse possessed order and proportion. What would be required in order to make such a determination would be, first, some knowledge of the end or purpose of the type of entity or creature in question, and secondly an assessment of how close a particular individual came to fulfilling that end.

Jouffroy then proceeds to argue that order and proportion also can be exhibited by objects which are nevertheless legitimately describable as ugly. "The donkey and the pig," he says, "are shaped in ways suitable to their ends" (CE, 66), yet a perfect exemplar of either species is going to be an ugly creature; the more perfect the exemplar, in fact, the uglier the creature. Indeed, a streamlined pig with longer legs, trimmer body, nimbler gait, etc. might well prove more beautiful than "a pig pure and simple." Order and proportion, therefore, do not constitute the hallmark of beauty, but only of suitability (*convenance*).

A few remarks are in order on this issue. For one thing, it should be noted that Jouffroy explicitly rejected the notion that creatures and artifacts are beautiful to the extent that they embody certain Platonic ideal types (CE, 59-61).²² The facts of human expe-

²² The fact is worth noting because certain later figures in the expressionist tradition, notably Lévêque and Gaborit, do, as we shall observe, incorporate this notion into their theories.

rience, he argued, did not in the least bear out the existence of such ideals. Yet the idea of an end, as applied to a natural creature, did not seem to bother him, although it would seem every bit as unwieldy as a Platonic ideal. Inasmuch as the "true end" of a horse would be the one assigned it by God, it would have to lie beyond our ken, as would the true end of every creature of nature. As a result, we could never measure the extent to which any particular horse fulfilled its end. This is not a disastrous consequence for Jouffroy, as he has denied, after all, that the nature of beauty lies in such a relation. And yet he does assert that *true* beauty consists in "the suitability of absolute means to the absolute end" (CE, 70). This is a puzzling assertion that seems to have more of a mystical than an aesthetic significance, since the absolute end of all things definitely lies beyond the scope of our possible knowledge, hence we could never experience true beauty.

What is more, once the absolute is allowed in, any possibility for ugliness would seem to be crowded out, which runs against the grain of another principle of importance to Jouffroy. The absolute, after all, poses only noble ends, and systematically gets its way; and the omniscience which alone could perceive absolute ends would of course have to be identical with the omniscience which posed those ends (we can't have a plurality of omniscient beings, after all). From this omniscient perspective, the beauty of all would be apparent; ugliness in nature turns out to be a genuine problem. Let us delay our examination of this problem, however, until Jouffroy's theory has been fully exposed.

Imitation, whether realistic or idealized, falls victim to the same reasoning as did the other notions we have considered. One can produce an excellent likeness, a photographic likeness, which in an imprecise manner of speaking might be termed beautiful, and yet if it is a likeness of a tumor or an autopsy it will also deserve to be termed ugly. The best imitation imaginable, then, is still capable of coexisting with the descriptive term "ugly."

In all these instances, the excellence in question can be found directly and intimately related to something ugly; therefore, true beauty does not lie in any of these properties. Further substantiation of this conclusion, Jouffroy believed, lies in the linguistic fact that none of these properties—imitation, order and proportion, novelty,

etc.—has the ugly for its opposite. This further weakens any claims they might have made to being legitimate constituents of true beauty.

The opposite of the novel would be the well worn, the familiar. So far is this from being the ugly, in fact, that many an instance would actually be beautiful. The classical and the traditional manage to become venerated as classical and traditional by having a beauty which doesn't spend itself in its initial presentation. An art work that we found to be a very bad imitation would not for that reason be termed ugly. Perhaps we would call it inept, maybe even laughably so; we might shake our heads in confusion over just who or what it is that supposedly was being represented. But in truth, if a portrait of Ingrid Bergman ended up looking like Humphrey Bogart we would never think to say it was an ugly likeness of Ingrid Bergman: it would simply be no likeness at all. And even though the face on the canvas was an ugly one, it was not ugly insofar as it was a bad likeness of an intended subject, but rather, because it was a good likeness (we might even be tempted to say a beautiful likeness) of an ugly person.

If these various everyday senses of the term "beauty" fail to live up to the demands of philosophical rigor, then in what does true beauty consist? Where does it reside? Interestingly, we find Jouffroy appealing even here to our linguistic dispositions to answer these questions. Even the rigorous sense of "beauty," that is, is embedded in the language. We simply must know where to look in order to extract it.

2.3 *What Beauty is: Expression and the Invisible*

Jouffroy articulates his next move in the following fashion: "We say this portrait is a good likeness, but it is ugly. . . . This proves that in ordinary speech (*la langue vulgaire*), beyond that sense of the word beautiful which applies to all things which affect us agreeably with no consideration of interest, common sense takes the word 'beautiful' in another, more restricted sense. . . . This other sense of beauty applies obviously to the invisible" (CE, 243). As we noted in presenting Jouffroy's views on psychology, he was a dualist with respect both to man and nature. Finite spirits were seen as the animating factors behind the voluntary actions of particular individuals; infinite spirit or God animates the rest of the universe (including those aspects of human being which don't follow from volition). It

is precisely these animating forces—or, in the case of nature, this animating force—which constitute the invisible and which therefore ultimately wear the laurels of true beauty. And we learn of this by observing the behavior of the word “ugly,” a word, Jouffroy apparently believes, which has not spread itself through the language to a point of imprecision, as has happened with the word “beautiful.” Since, therefore, we find our use of the term “ugly” pointing quite unequivocally toward the invisible, we can properly conclude that it is there where true beauty is to be found, as well: “The only thing to which we apply these words [‘beautiful’ and ‘ugly’] is the moral reality, nature in its moral, invisible essence, expressed through material forms which attract or repel us” (CE, 237).

This view that our world consists of a spiritual component in interaction with a material component was hardly unique to Jouffroy, or even to Jouffroy and Reid: it had long been a staple of western philosophy. In addition, Jouffroy held that, to speak properly, neither spirit nor matter directly presents itself: what we perceive, instead, are *bodies* in their interactions with one another. A body is a material aggregate, characterizeable by predicates of the usual sort: soft, hard, round, heavy, etc. Matter in itself is incapable of characterization—it is the ground of all bodies and their qualities, but is itself without qualities. “That which is responsible for producing any aggregation is force” (CE, 141), and force, of course, refers to the spiritual, active component in nature. Thus the extension of a body, its form, solidity, color, are all produced by the workings of force on matter. In short, the very physical nature of any object or being is completely the result of the activity of spirit. Things take the shape they take because spirit decrees that they should do so: force *expresses itself* through material nature.

By the same token, individual minds express themselves through the bodies to which they are in some (mysterious) way attached. The bodies are what we see, but the minds (or in the case of nature, the Mind) behind the bodies bear sole responsibility for the manner in which the latter present themselves. “The qualities which bodies possess are no more qualities of matter itself than are, for example, the characters printed on a paper qualities of that paper, although we can no more have bodies without matter than we can have characters without paper” (CE, 142).

The notion that bodies are the products of the consolidating force exerted by spirit was not looked upon by Jouffroy as just airy speculation. As we noted in describing his psychology he regarded it as a legitimate scientific hypothesis, and he believed that recent studies (studies recent in the 1820s, of course) lent confirmation to this hypothesis. To inquire into the manner in which force acts upon material reality—even if the actual connection or interaction is in principle unobservable—is to engage in scientific inquiry. To seek to know what is expressed by force in its action upon matter is to engage in aesthetic analysis. Understanding the “language” through which spirit discloses itself is the business of the artist.

Before looking more closely at the signs and symbols through which force reveals itself, it is worth noting that there is a sense in which an individual does experience the invisible directly, without any material embodiment mediating between active spirit and apprehending spirit, and that is in the phenomenon of self-consciousness itself. Jouffroy claims “When I feel a certain passion . . . I sense it within me most immediately. . . . The invisible in this case is in direct relation with my intelligence” (CE, 188). I do not have to look into a mirror, or hear myself shouting, in order to know that I am feeling a certain passion; I just feel it. This consideration, however, as interesting and important as it is to the science of psychology, turns out, in Jouffroy’s estimation (as it was in Reid’s),²³ to be irrelevant to the apprehension of beauty. Such self knowledge, he argues, can never be the cause of a disinterested pleasure (CE, 188-92). When a certain emotion grips me, my attitude toward it can never be disinterested—the emotion repels the urge toward disinterestedness—while if I do at last, after some effort, achieve the required distance, the emotion in question can only have withered or departed. Furthermore, since self knowledge is achieved without the mediation of external signs, it cannot produce any disinterested *pleasure*, for such pleasure turns out (as we shall see in due course) to be grounded in our apprehension of and reaction to these very signs. Introspection is essential to the *science* of the beautiful, Jouffroy holds, for it is through observing how we respond to different things that we come to demarcate the area proper to beauty. But the science of the beautiful is not itself beautiful. In

²³ See above, Chap. 1, Sect. 2.3, Subsect. 3.

doing science it is helpful, if not essential, to turn our attention inward; in apprehending beauty our attention is directed outward. And the experience which this outwardly directed attention produces then becomes the subject of scientific scrutiny.

Actually in the foregoing analysis I have exercised some of the editorial power that I would like to think Jouffroy would have used if he had lived long enough to revise his lectures, for throughout his development of the entire argument establishing the invisible as the locus of beauty, he grouped "expression" among the other inadequate attributes such as novelty and imitation. He reflected, for example, on the spectacle of an extremely drunken man, and judged "in spite of whatever repugnance you might feel, the sight of him captures your attention, interests you. . . . Here the power of expression appears, disengaged from any other attraction . . . and by itself, independent of whatever is expressed, . . . is for you a cause of pleasure" (CE, 78). Expressiveness, this is to say, is just another of the properties of an object capable of producing a disinterested pleasure. But it too, as with novelty, order and proportion, etc., does not have as its opposite the ugly. Inexpressiveness contains implications of blandness or insipidity, but not of ugliness. A pebble lying on the ground, having no distinctive shape or coloration, would be inexpressive; so much so, in fact, that it never found its way into the pocket of a child. If it *had* been somehow ugly, it might well have been picked up and carried off, for it would have had a definite story to tell, something about it would have conveyed intimations of some dark, unseemly content. The crucial quotation at the beginning of this section in fact reads "We say this portrait is a good likeness but it is ugly; *this face is expressive, but it is ugly . . .*" (CE, 243).²⁴

As a result of our examination, however, I believe it can be seen to be a bit excessive on Jouffroy's part to have placed expression in such company. True, we can distinguish the act of expression from the expressed content; and let us also grant that it is this content which is ultimately responsible for our judgments of beauty or ugliness, and not the mere act of expression. Nevertheless, expression does, on Jouffroy's account, turn out to be a necessary element in the process of apprehending the beautiful, as it is the universal link between ourselves and the invisible (except in the case of

²⁴ Emphasis mine.

introspection, which, as we have seen, is deemed unaesthetic precisely because it bypasses the medium of expressive signs). The invisible cannot but manifest itself through material means, and this very mode of manifestation is what we call expression. Nothing similar can be claimed of any of the other aesthetic properties—imitation, novelty, etc. Expression is therefore in this special way unique.

2.4 *The Language of Signs*

Since expression can only be accomplished through signs and symbols, let us observe the manner in which these devices are said to function. In his essay "Faits et pensées sur les signes," Jouffroy urges that for anything to function as significant, first "there must be a definite relation between the thing signified and that which signifies it," and secondly, "the mind must grasp this relation when the sign appears" (NM, 274). There are two ways in which such a relation can be established: either it is natural or it is arrived at by convention.

Conventional symbolic relations are those which we humans devise for our use in communicating whatever it is that we need to communicate. Most of language falls under this classification, a fact underscored by the countless different languages among different peoples who find themselves in different circumstances which give rise to different needs. Still, there are elements of human communication which seem to be grounded not in any arbitrary conventions but in nature itself. The most vivid examples of such elements involve those instances where we spontaneously give vent to a particular feeling or emotion: "a cry which indicates pain . . . among the Hotentots, the eskimos, the Chinese, the Indians . . . will be immediately interpreted in the same fashion. . . . Such a cry is thus a sign universally employed by all men to express a certain phenomenon and universally interpreted and understood by all as expressing this phenomenon" (NM, 280-81).

Jouffroy contends, however, that in spite of their universality, such natural signs are not connected to their source in any necessary fashion. Once we reach an age, for example, when our will has established control over our behavior we are capable of repressing cries of pain which as children we would naturally have emitted. Thus, even though we naturally grasp the connection between pain

and a certain cry, there is not the same necessity attaching to this relation as there is, say, to experiencing an object within spatial and temporal parameters. Jouffroy has left enough evidence here and there, however, to indicate his awareness that our control over these natural modes of behavior is limited. A mother can generally distinguish between those times when her child is crying for attention and when it is crying from discomfort. An adult might be able to muffle a cry of pain, but then a muffled cry is just as expressive and comprehensible as an outright cry, only it tells a slightly different story. And if we succeed in silencing a cry altogether a sensitive onlooker could nevertheless read pain in our eyes or in the whiteness of our knuckles, just as a discerning listener can distinguish a genuine laugh from a forced one. Hypocrisy has its natural signs, too.

The very existence of human society, Jouffroy contends, depends upon the existence of such natural signs, and it is undoubtedly for this reason that God has provided us with them: "it is essential that we understand what transpires in the soul of our own kind, however invisible this soul might be to us, and that others in turn should be able to read ours; in a word, that there be intelligent communication among men" (NM, 290). And natural signs are seen to constitute the necessary first step in this communicative process.

As there are natural signs through which man communicates with man, so too, it seems, are there natural signs by which nature communicates to man. The same properties as those noted above are attributable to these latter signs, as well: our grasp of them comes a priori—there is no text we need (or can) turn to to learn what they signify outside of nature itself—and yet they too could have been otherwise. Jagged lines *could* have suggested restfulness and curved lines agitation; but while we intellectually apprehend this possibility, there is no denying just what tongue nature does actually speak to us.

All across the surface of nature are spread the symbols through which we can come to understand, with varying degrees of limitation, the invisible force which has shaped things as they are. Certain of these symbols are clear, others obscure, others positively unfathomable, yet everywhere we turn we confront symbols: "The sound of the wind and the murmur of the waters is not without significance. . . . The shape which an animal presents, or a tree, are symbolic devices. . . . The pebble which rolls beneath our feet

signifies something" (CE, 165-66). In brief, "all objects and all natural phenomena have meaning; they express something" (CE, 165-66).

Now the face of the animal, on Jouffroy's account, seems often to convey its sense quite clearly; a leaf in the wind is perhaps somewhat obscure, while a nondescript pebble is seen as being utterly inscrutable. And yet to be formed in some manner is to be expressive. In general, clarity of expression, for Jouffroy, appears to increase as we ascend the phylogenetic scale. *La force* is more explicit in a plant or a tree than in a stone or a drop of water; and in a monkey it manifests itself more clearly than in a worm.

In the human being, of course, the broadest spectrum and clearest representation of inwardness is to be found. It bears noting, however, that a person is seen, from Jouffroy's point of view, as being expressive on two (sometimes perhaps three) different levels—the spiritual, properly speaking (which at times is divided into the intellectual and the moral), and the physical (CE, 181-82). Moral beauty (or ugliness) involves the expression of our voluntary nature, and as we have seen for Jouffroy, the voluntary aspect of our being is what constitutes the true self.²⁵ Physical or vital beauty would then involve the expression, on the part of the body, of certain traits that lie outside the control of the will. Certainly we could not survive without the proper functioning of certain systems and organs which operate involuntarily, but since nothing in material nature acts solely of its own accord, then these various organic functions must answer to the demands and express the intentions of a different willful force—the invisible which permeates all nature—God himself.

Jouffroy does at times speak as if moral beauty were in some important respect ultimate, yet he also draws this moral-physical

²⁵ To muddy the issue somewhat, Jouffroy seems to use "*moral*" in two distinct senses. At times he attaches it directly to the notion of free will—*volonté*—hence at such times "moral beauty" refers unambiguously to what in English we would refer to as "moral." At other times, however, it seems to have a broader or more indistinct reference, as when he says "let someone draw a line before us; at first we have the idea of this line, then this image awakens in us *une idée morale* . . . ; it is that which the image expresses." (CE, 165) And he proceeds to observe how two different sounds or colors likewise will convey *deux idées morales différentes*. Here, volition and morality, as we normally understand these terms, do not seem to be obvious constituents of "*morale*."

distinction, and it is quite clear that it is in harmony with his overall metaphysical and psychological commitments. If this problem area is to enjoy any resolution, it could well lie in the moral nature of the divinity itself, such that what we refer to as physical beauty, from one point of view, might assume a moral cast when viewed from a higher plane. This approach, however, would land us in a different briar patch, the one alluded to earlier concerning the ugly in nature, which we will examine more thoroughly at the end of this analysis.

Certain objects in nature, it has been contended, express their interior more clearly than others. It is the special province of the artist to have a firm command over the various expressive materials which nature—including human nature—calls upon. Some artists work in the medium of sound, some with color, still others employ language in constructing expressive imagery “visible” only to the mind’s eye. Jouffroy sees each medium as constituting a specific linguistic domain of its own:

we should consider . . . these different classes of elementary appearances as so many languages which render, each in its own way, immaterial, living nature. . . . These languages, true languages that they are, have also their own alphabets; these alphabets have never been formalized, nevertheless they are inscribed in the minds of all artists, without their knowledge. (CE, 164-65)

A strikingly similar thesis, incidentally, had been posed almost a century earlier by Condillac, in his *Essai sur l’origine des connaissances humaines*.²⁶ Undoubtedly Jouffroy was familiar with this work, but if his own thinking owed any debt to Condillac it is not surprising that he failed to acknowledge it, inasmuch as Condillac constituted, for the commonsense (or eclectic, or spiritualist) thinkers something of an arch villain. Jouffroy goes so far as to suggest how it would be interesting to draw up a *tableau comparatif* of all the different artistic alphabets, leading one to believe that he

²⁶ Etienne Bonnet de Condillac, *Essai sur l’origine des connoissances humaine*, vol. 2 (Amsterdam: Pierre Mortier, 1746). See especially Section I of Part II: “De l’origine et des progrès du langage,” 1-223. More recently we have seen other versions of this thesis developed by Suzanne Langer in *Feeling and Form* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1953), and by Deryck Cooke in *The Language of Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), to mention a couple.

viewed the different art forms as, in principle, translatable into one another, a notion which, though never carried out, has come to look much less radical in this century, what with the deep and broad interpenetrations among the arts that we have witnessed.

Idealization and naturalism constitute for Jouffroy the two schools of thought with regard to artistic expression.²⁷ Should the artist seek to portray reality exactly as it presents itself? This is the claim of the naturalist. Those committed to idealization, on the other hand, would hold that the artist should strain all irrelevant and distracting details out of a composition—be it a painting, a story, a statue—in order to present the central idea in as pure a state as possible. While Cousin presented this conflict in terms of two contemporary theoreticians—Eméric-David and Quatremère de Quincy—Jouffroy more commonly cites particular artists or works of art. His paradigmatic idealist dramatist is Racine, with Molière tending much more toward realism and Walter Scott reaching the realist limit. The Apollo Belvédère is his typically idealized sculpture; Flemish or Dutch painting embodies the limit of naturalism. Interestingly, while he and Cousin, when all is said and done, wind up sharing the same viewpoint—the synthetic position which holds that both approaches capture something of the essence of art—Cousin, as we saw, exhibited a temperamental preference for the ideal, while Jouffroy's artistic temperament inclined him toward the naturalistic. One other point of comparison between these two thinkers on this matter: it will be recalled that for Cousin the ideal served a function not just in art criticism but in metaphysics, as well, being one of the attributes through which the absolute was alleged to manifest itself. For Jouffroy, the ideal is never mentioned apart from the domain of art criticism; it is never attached to God, the absolute, or *la force*.

Brute naturalism is of little interest to Jouffroy. With regard to painting, that would be “the school in whose paintings there is nothing to be found but the more or less faithful imitation of nature” (CE, 200). To accomplish this, an artist is obliged to reproduce “not

²⁷ Jouffroy uses the terms “idealism” and “realism,” but since both have strong connotations of quite a different sort in metaphysical or epistemological contexts I have chosen to replace the former with “idealization” and the latter with “naturalism.”

only the principal circumstances [of a man, say, in the grip of a certain passion], but all the other circumstances in detail, right down to the most insignificant" (CE, 200). Employment of this technique easily results in a diffusion of interest in a canvas, as the central focus, or what would have been the central focus, is dissipated by a swarm of distracting details.

Idealization in its most nearly pure form suffers, of course, from somewhat the opposite shortcoming. While a naturalist might depict, say, a person in love, the artist who idealizes attempts to portray love, simpliciter, and to do this he must employ a minimum of devices that would evoke thoughts of particular persons or situations. Such an artist, as Jouffroy sees it, wants to go as directly as possible to the invisible, but as we remarked a few pages back, this is the business of the introspective psychologist or the aesthete, not the artist. Paintings employing this approach would be little more than textbook studies; dramas turn out either sounding like psychological case studies or presenting hollow stereotypes of characters (or, at worst, both).

Both of these approaches, in Jouffroy's estimation, have their positive aspects, as well, and for this reason he recommends employing an artistic technique that would synthesize the two. The skilled artist knows that in order to depict an emotion such as anger, certain elements of a subject's or a character's behavior should be suppressed while others ought to be stressed, and that any subsidiary details that could detract from a unified emotional thrust should be eliminated. In this way the impact and significance of a work can be highlighted as fully as possible. And this involves idealization.

In addition, it will be recalled that according to Jouffroy the individual who had control over the signs and symbols through which nature speaks was the artist. Such signs are the material manifestations of the invisible—elements necessary to grasping spiritual significance. It is the naturalist who attends to the matter of portraying surfaces of things in ways that speak to us with the same living voice that nature itself speaks to us. Art devoid of naturalism becomes bloodless analysis and abstraction. It takes a just measure of naturalism, therefore, to bring a work of art to life.

Let me draw up a brief sketch of Jouffroy's aesthetic position to this point. The beautiful produces in us a certain pleasure or agreeable emotion which has as one definitive characteristic that it is

disinterested. We learn, principally through beauty's opposition to ugliness, that the source of this pleasant emotion lies in the invisible. This constitutes the second definitive condition. This invisible—the spiritual interior of all reality—expresses itself through signs or symbols which we are naturally disposed to grasp on sensorially apprehending them. Nature expresses itself through such signs, as does man, and among men, those who are the greatest masters of the languages of symbols are the artists.

With the exception of the stipulation that the pleasure which beauty produces in us is disinterested, whatever else Jouffroy's aesthetics contains so far can be found in Reid, though some of it exists there either in germ or implicitly. However, important questions still remain, and Reid does not have answers for all of them; and those answers he does offer leave something to be desired. (1) Why does a thing of beauty move us in the agreeable fashion in which it does? (2) What, after all, is a disinterested pleasure? (3) How can we be pleased by a dramatic work such as *Macbeth*, in which everyone is killed, but not before we are informed that our life is like a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing? (4) If all of nature's surface is expressive, why isn't all of nature's surface beautiful?

Jouffroy attempts answers to all these questions, and not surprisingly, his answers have a distinct psychological cast. All of them emanate from a single psychological concept, the concept which plays the key role in his aesthetics and for which he deserves much credit for having developed as thoroughly as he did. I refer to the notion of sympathy—that peculiar capacity by which we “feel ourselves into” our surroundings, whether they be human or impersonal.

2.5 Sympathy

We do in fact receive one hint from Reid that some process such as sympathy is at work in aesthetic appreciation when, in his discussion of grandeur, he suggests “in the contemplation of uncommon excellence, the mind feels a noble enthusiasm, which disposes it to the imitation of what it admires” (I, 495). He mentions this disposition but once, and though it sounds somewhat like sympathy he does not employ this word in reference to it, and in no way does it become integral to his system. Indeed, this one remark is general

enough that we could just as easily infer that Reid is referring here not to sympathy but to inspiration.

There are, however, other possible sources for this notion with which Jouffroy was undoubtedly acquainted—other Scottish sources, even. Hume is perhaps the earliest thinker to employ “sympathy” in explaining our appreciation for the beautiful; he does so in Books II and III of the *Treatise of Human Nature*.²⁸ Cousin also alludes briefly to sympathy in his lectures of 1818. First, in arguing that the artist should seek to represent the moral life symbolically, he claims “at the same time that [art] is symbolic to a high degree, it is also sympathetic. The ideal and sympathy, such are the two supreme laws of art” (VBB, 268). But of these two supreme laws, it is the ideal which receives virtually all his attention. The only other mention of sympathy comes a bit further on, in his explanation of how we can appreciate natural beauty: “God is at once in nature and in man; thus is explained man’s sympathy toward nature” (VBB, 274). This may well have been enough to set Jouffroy thinking. In the end, everybody’s ideas come from somewhere. Certainly no thinker prior to Jouffroy probes the aesthetic ramifications of sympathy in such depth, although many who have followed him have made extensive use of the notion (some have preferred, however, the term “empathy;” German thinkers such as Worringer naturally speak of “*Einführung*”).

Although there is little doubt that it was introspective psychological observation which led Jouffroy to elevate sympathy to such an important explanatory position in his aesthetics, he nevertheless offers a few arguments to provide further substantiation for this move. I’ll present three of them here.

First, he remarks that “the pleasure which different classes of creatures are capable of bringing to us increases or decreases according to the extent to which they share elements in common with ourselves” (CE, 26). We take greater delight, he is claiming, in watching a squirrel at play than in looking at a flower, however beautiful a flower it might be. A dog or some such creature which shows even more traits in common with human beings will please us

²⁸ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 2 vols. (London: Dent, 1972), II, 24-28 (Book II, Part I, Sect. ix), 76-83 (Book II, Part II, Sect. v), 272-86 (Book III, Part III, Sect. i).

even more. And he sees this pleasure as capable only of following from our tendency to sympathize with these creatures, with this tendency varying in intensity along the lines suggested. There does seem to be some truth to this, too, as the protests of the animal rights activists are normally directed at the “inhumane” treatment of animals well up on the phylogenetic scale. No one is clamoring as yet for more humane methods of exterminating Japanese beetle grubs or cockroaches; and the concern that is shown for certain “lowly” creatures such as the snail darter or the cave-dwelling shrimp stems from the fear that their entire species might be eradicated—an academic rather than a sympathetic concern. When tuna fishermen ensnare dolphins—another species of intelligent mammalians—in their nets, often causing grave harm to them, they are severely criticized for it, but they are not criticized so much for being tuna fishermen. Thus it is far from fanciful for Jouffroy to claim that the more like us a being is, the more we tend to sympathize with it, and the more we sympathize with it, the greater will be the disinterested pleasure we receive on observing its free activity, just as we have now observed that our discomfort is greater when we witness it being abused.

Secondly, Jouffroy claims “the pleasure that different individuals from the same class of beings bring us varies directly with the amount of life or vivacity manifested by these individuals” (CE, 20). The more lively the creature, the more we warm up to it; the more sluggish and inert it is, the less likely it is to capture our affection. And even where we are considering not living creatures but inanimate objects, they too, remember, are expressive, and our preference, he observes, will be for those “whose forms best express power, lightness, sweetness (*douceur*)—all qualities of life.” Life in nature, “life” in inanimate objects are thus analogues to the life we so cherish in ourselves. And all activity, it must be kept in mind, is necessarily mental in origin, from Jouffroy’s perspective.

The third argument, a bit more complicated structurally, proceeds as follows. First, as we have seen, Jouffroy drives a wedge between the beautiful and the useful. It is not just that they differ, but that they are mutually repellant to one another: the one exits upon the entrance of the other, and vice versa. He then goes on to show how in precisely the same fashion, “sympathy falls in the presence of utility” (CE, 29). When we delight in watching a horse

run freely and effortlessly, we find ourselves sympathizing with his movements, but when our delight stems from the fact that he is the horse we just bet on, sympathy is replaced by greed—a most “interested” emotion. Witness that if the horse we were in sympathy with suddenly went lame, our heart would immediately go out to him, whereas if some injury caused the horse we had bet on to pull up short and finish out of the money we would most likely curse him. In short, then, we find the relationship between sympathy and utility to be precisely parallel to the relationship between beauty and utility. This along with the other reasons cited suggests to Jouffroy that the connection between beauty and sympathy is not accidental but essential.

We are now in a position to consider Jouffroy’s answers to the questions we posed at the end of the previous section. Why does a thing of beauty move us in the agreeable manner that it does? Sympathy provides the key. “Such is the secret of sympathy. [From egoism] man loves himself, and the objects which enable his nature to be triumphant please him. [Through sympathy] man loves himself, and the objects which, while not enabling his nature to triumph, enable him to see it as triumphant, likewise please him. Egoism and sympathy are both transformations of self-love” (CE, 16). Thus by “feeling ourselves into” nature (and other people, too, and art) we sometimes feel a certain pleasure upon seeing things develop as we think they should (*selon l’ordre*). When we see something beautiful, a feeling arises in us which is somehow parallel to that which is being expressed; we vibrate sympathetically, so to speak. But of course it is essential, for the object to be deemed beautiful, that it bespeak vitality, activity, intelligence—*la force* acting with as few impediments as possible, manifesting itself with as much clarity as possible.

Nothing pleases us more in our own lives, Jouffroy claims, than to exert our intelligence, to direct our will toward the best of ends, to engage in activities in which the liberty of our movements coincides with the most expeditious way of reaching our goals. Action of this sort is satisfying, rewarding, fulfilling, gratifying or just plain fun. The pleasure we feel is immediate, it is our own, and it is an interested pleasure. When we observe like actions in other beings the pleasure we feel is sympathetic; it belongs to us as any pleasure does, of course, but it is something of a faint copy of the

original which was expressed by someone or something else; and it is disinterested.

What is a disinterested pleasure? Spelling out the defining features of the pleasure which sympathy brings should answer this question. Jouffroy notes three special characteristics of sympathy which differentiate it from other emotional states (CE 268-69). For one thing, we cannot be in a sympathetic relation to ourselves. We sympathize with the lives of others, but we *live* our lives. From this, the further difference follows that the sympathetic state is less vivid than the lived state, similar to the way in which Hume declared that ideas were qualitatively less vivid than the impressions from which they followed. What is more, "all circumstances accompanying the personal state are absent in the sympathetic state" (CE, 268). Objects that threaten or impede those with whom we sympathize are neither any threat nor any impediment to ourselves.

Other aspects of the sympathetic state which contribute to or enhance the pleasure that accompanies it are also mentioned by Jouffroy. It is pleasing in general, he explains, merely to "discover the invisible" (CE, 272-73), to discover that somewhere else in material nature there dwells a consciousness comparable to our own. What's more, a sympathetic state amounts virtually to living a life without expending any of the effort necessary thereto, and without courting any of the risks; and this, he believes, can only please us. In addition, we can immerse ourselves in such an alternate, virtual "life" and extricate ourselves from it with complete freedom: if Mahler's lugubriousness is proving too much for me, I can always walk out of the concert hall and into the fresh air. Real life problems, however, would dog me wherever I might go. Finally, Jouffroy suggests that experiencing states which contrast greatly with one's own frame of mind can bring a definite pleasure, enriching our emotional lives without importing any of the usual emotional hazards.

Putting together these various aspects of the sympathetic experience and accentuating the variety of special pleasures which accompany this experience, we come as close as we can to an account of what is involved in disinterested pleasure. Surely, at least, we have advanced a long way from the transcendental context in which the concept was pioneered by Kant.

From the analysis Jouffroy has provided it is at least conceivable that we might be able to account for the pleasure we receive from a work whose subject matter is, say, extreme grief and desolation, and to explain why we return to such a work again and again, each time finding beauty in the expression of emotional states which we desire under no conditions to find ourselves in. A work of art provides us with an analogue of life; to the extent that it lives, it pleases us and we find it beautiful. If the depiction of grim events is required to generate such a feeling of life, that is not surprising, for without conflict of some sort, without obstacles to surmount, real life itself tends precariously toward the humdrum. Happily, the conflict and the suffering that are integral to an appropriately animated drama are extenuated by the various conditions cited above which mollify the sympathetic experience and render it not just acceptable but positively pleasant.

How can all of nature's surface be expressive without all of nature being beautiful? It was the ugly, we must not forget, which showed us the way to the beautiful; having now seen how sympathy enables us to account for beauty, it is only reasonable to wonder how it is that nature ever might be ugly. Jouffroy's response to this query invites us to look yet deeper into the nature of sympathy.

For one thing, Jouffroy maintains that sympathy is a natural response to any display of life, and that sympathy is therefore always accompanied by pleasure. In the presence of any malignant exercise of power or any pronounced absence of power, however, a feeling of antipathy rapidly succeeds the initial urge to sympathize. This antipathy does not obliterate the original sympathy, but is a powerful countervailing force, and is sufficient to raise in us a strong negative feeling, of the sort that we associate with any confrontation with the ugly. When, for example, "we have grown accustomed to see a being at a certain level of development and we come to perceive that it is no longer at this level of development, this being then appears to us to be in a state of incompleteness, imperfection, and we are disagreeably affected by its appearance" (CE, 253). The being shows life, we sympathize; we naturally expect much more, we are dismayed to find this diminution of vital power. In short, not everything which nature (man, art) expresses appeals to our preference for vitality. Where some phenomenon in any of these domains is found grossly deficient—expressive less of life and virtue

than of decadence and vice—we judge it to be ugly. In any case, both sympathy and antipathy lead us into the realm of the invisible, the true source, according to Jouffroy, of all aesthetic qualities.²⁹

2.6 *Criticism*

A bit of critical reflection is in order at this point, some of it directed toward the expression theory in general, some of it aimed at Jouffroy's version of it. To appreciate the refinements to the theory which the next generation of thinkers was to recommend, it is important to be alert to its principal points of vulnerability. I'll not raise the most obvious questions—Is there a God who expresses himself through nature? Is there a soul which expresses itself through our body?—not because they are not important questions, for obviously they are; nor because they weren't being raised at the time when our authors were writing, for obviously they were. The fact is that they have been raised and pursued in such a multitude of philosophical contexts that to engage them one more time here would be merely redundant. Instead I shall expose a few problem areas which are internal to the expressionist doctrine.

1. *Reading nature's signs.* Where human behavior is concerned, the signs which disclose our intentions can be extremely subtle, and while certain of them may be detectable by infants or young children—anger, for example, or affection—others require the kind of sensitivity which comes with age. A smile of genuine merriment might spread itself across one's face, while a forced smile will be a trifle lopsided; a display of honest concern and one of feigned

²⁹ Given the foregoing analysis of Jouffroy's aesthetics, Boas' assertion, intended to characterize his theory of beauty, to the effect that "just as truth is not the sole possession of any individual, neither is beauty" (*Encycl. of Phil.*, vol. 4, 294), appears quite bizarre. The oddity of his view concerning truth was explained earlier in terms of an inadequate notion of what commonsense philosophy involved. The parallel with beauty is equally strange, and in addition one can only wonder what it might mean to "possess" beauty. If it means to *be* beautiful, we have seen how an object goes about achieving that. The fact that no one beautiful thing constitutes the totality of beautiful things may be true, but is trivial. If it means to apprehend beauty, virtually the entire text of Jouffroy's *Cours* is designed to show how this is achieved. Boas' remarks on the beautiful, the sublime, the whole, indicate that he read the last chapter of Jouffroy's *Cours* and based his interpretation on that alone, indifferent to what the other thirty-nine chapters suggested.

concern might be differentiable by only the faintest shadings in the tone of voice employed: Jouffroy himself acknowledged as much. Since nature as a whole is immensely grand and more diverse than we who occupy but the smallest corner of it, it would seem reasonable to expect a proportionately greater richness in its expressive means. If reading the faces of our fellow human beings poses a considerable challenge, reading the face of nature should verge on the insuperable.

Furthermore, where human behavior is concerned we have various means of testing and confirming the inner-outer correlation—what people say to our faces and what we learn that they are saying behind our backs; what sort of behavior we come to expect from certain individuals; how, in general, a particular gesture integrates itself into someone's overall lifestyle; to what extent people carry through on their declarations of intent. Factors such as these can at least sensitize us so that we will look more closely for slight signs that might betray an intention contrary to the one seemingly expressed. Where nature is concerned, however, the expressive surface is all we can ever, even in principle, gain access to. Thus even though nature offers us a much more complex surface to interpret, it offers no means whatever for us to sharpen our interpretive capacities or confirm our readings.

At one point Jouffroy makes the remarkable assertion that "no human face bears as profoundly the imprint of sham and hypocrisy as does the face of a cat" (CE, 188). But how can a cat possibly behave hypocritically? Hypocrisy involves consciousness, apperception, the knowing intent to deceive, and these are distinctly human powers. Nature, then, must be misleading us, but if it can mislead us here, it can mislead us anywhere, and in the case of nature we have no means of initiating a new line of questioning in hopes of gaining a better slant on its intentions. We shouldn't pillory Jouffroy for one ill-conceived remark, but it does in any case underscore a problem fundamental to viewing nature as expressive.

Jouffroy seems actually to have been aware of this problem. Toward the end of his *Cours*, while seemingly reminding us one more time of the basic thesis of the work, he nevertheless allows a qualification to sneak in, saying "only the power which exists in objects is capable of moving us aesthetically, and this power in objects is always found, *if not really, at least in idea*, comparable to

the power which animates us" (CE, 315).³⁰ For this power to exist only in idea, however, raises serious doubts about it as a power at all, or if not that, at least about our ability to draw inferences about the nature of this power. Further along this road, Jouffroy writes in his "Faits et pensées sur les signes":

The weeping willow expresses dejection and sadness in the same manner as do certain modifications of the human form. We believe, however, that there is nothing sad and dejected in the principle which gives life to this tree. The sign, therefore, preserves for us its expression, its power as a sign, even when we believe that there is nothing in the cause which in the least resembles the thing signified. (NM, 293-94)

One does not have to pursue the implications of this assertion very far to realize that it jeopardizes the whole notion that nature, like mankind, expresses its interior through signs. This was the last piece Jouffroy wrote in his life, though, so he certainly was in no position—or condition—to work out the necessary ontological revisions which such a view demands. That task was inherited by Sully-Prudhomme.

2. *Can nature be ugly?* For the expression theory of Reid and Cousin this is a simple problem which is seemingly insuperable. If beauty is linked to moral goodness, then natural beauty would be the external manifestation of nature's inner moral perfection. But since in the case of nature this inner moral perfection belongs to God, it becomes immediately apparent that there is no room for inner moral *imperfection*; and since this latter is what would be perceived, in its material mode of manifestation, as ugly, there can be no ugliness in nature. Yet many natural spectacles, in particular those which bespeak infertility or decadence, do strike us as ugly. We can either deny the theory or reject the intuition that certain things are ugly; we can't keep both.

In a sense, the problem of natural ugliness is even more acute for Jouffroy. Perhaps for this reason he has a greater arsenal of weapons to bring to bear on it. It is more acute in that, as was noted earlier,³¹

³⁰ Emphasis mine.

³¹ See above, Sect. 2.3.

the ugly plays a crucial role in his approach to and location of the beautiful. It was only because the invisible proved to be the sole element in our aesthetic experience which could properly bear the label "ugly" that Jouffroy felt justified in concluding that true beauty resided there, as well. So if nature, by virtue of the fact that it is God's handiwork, could not be anywhere ugly, then by Jouffroy's central argument, it could not be anywhere beautiful, either. And yet obviously it is.

One of Jouffroy's contentions which bears directly on this issue is that beauty is associated with vivacity, life, energy—the more any portion of nature exhibits these qualities, the more God's goodness shines through. But there is no reason why God's goodness should not shine through equally, throughout all nature. If we were to come across the decaying carcass of a beached whale, this on Jouffroy's account would be perceived as ugly, because it reflects death, decay, putrescence. However, the obvious reply is that this is false, for the carcass is actually teeming with life—birds feed on it, crabs feed on it, and bacteria in numberless quantities are flourishing on it. One life has given way to millions—billions—of other lives. This is the way nature works.

Jouffroy would not surrender yet, though. His next manoeuvre would be to introduce the concept of sympathy into the dispute. Granted the whale is providing sustenance for a small world of life, nevertheless the life forms supported by it, such as I enumerated above, are far lower on the phylogenetic scale than the whale. As a result, we are more inclined to sympathize with the whale than with the creatures feasting upon him, hence we view the spectacle in terms of death, not life. Still, it is easy to turn the tables on this rejoinder as well: a pride of lions feasting on the carcass of a boa constrictor would hardly quicken our soul and extract from us the description "beautiful," but along the lines Jouffroy has drawn we would sympathize more with the lions than the snake.

All of the above can be granted, yet one can still assert that indeed everything *is* beautiful, in its own way. This seems more a profession of faith than an aesthetic judgment, however, although it does hold that in effect everything in nature is *selon l'ordre*, to use Jouffroy's phrase, and if we should fail to find a place for a certain item in this order, the fault could well be with us, and we should readjust our sights somewhat. (This very position emerges in the

writings of Alphonse Dumont, to be examined in Chapter 5.) Only Jouffroy's argument linking beauty with ugliness in terms of their ultimate source prevents him from wholeheartedly embracing this position.

3. *Human beauty*. The beauty which we discern in our fellow human beings is certainly not a topic free of difficulties either. Beauty pageants such as they exist here and around the world, for men or for women, are rarely won by saints. Some slight effort is made to glimpse the inner being of Miss America—they ask her a question; she must have some talent—none whatsoever is made in Mr. America contests. Is this “real beauty” which these contestants possess? Reid and Cousin avoid the problem by simply answering this question in the negative. Socrates is beautiful; Schwarzenegger is not. The qualities we warm up to and admire are precisely those which disclose a person's positive moral worth; the rest counts for nothing except insofar as it renders us fit for doing our duty. There is thus no troubling inconsistency in their position; its only shortcoming is that it doesn't accord well with a large chunk of our intuitions in this area.

Jouffroy gets somewhat deeper in trouble, if only because he pursues the implications of the dualist ontology further than either of his predecessors. A person is morally responsible only for what he wills, hence only those aspects of one's “expressive surface” which fall under the dominion of his will reveal his moral traits and will reflect his beautiful (or ugly) interior. But there is much to any person which does not fall within the scope of his will—basic skeletal structure, metabolism, height, circulatory system, alimentary functions, etc. Still, these organs, functions and aspects of one's nature are neither inert nor autonomous: where the human will is not, there the divine will is. So the person turns out to be a mysterious compound of elements, some directed by himself, some by God.

Since Jouffroy, as we have noted, locates natural beauty in vitality or life-force, the more active and energetic an individual's involuntary systems are, the more beautiful will be the merely physical side of his being. How much of one's being lies beyond his control it is obviously difficult to say, but it is equally obvious that a goodly portion of it does. Thus the human being must be seen as embodying two kinds of beauty, some tracing to himself as a moral, autonomous agent, some to God as an activating force. Or beauty of

one sort will coexist in combination with ugliness of the other sort. Clearly this does not help in the complex process of reading and interpreting natural signs. And yet equally clearly, it is thoroughly in line with the dualist ontology and its attendant notion of agent causality which Jouffroy inherited from Reid. As we will see in considering Lévêque (in Chapter 4), this problem "will be more problematic, ere it will be less."

In spite of these and other problems, the expression theory maintained, and continues to maintain, a genuine attractiveness. We really do, it seems, find ourselves drawn to those individuals whose faces, indeed whose gestures and entire carriage reflect a character with which we are in sympathy, and sometimes it is the smallest of features that reflects this—a certain something in one's smile, an insouciance in their gait, who knows what. And regardless of the theory of mind to which one subscribes, this character is going to deserve to be treated as something "interior" more so invariably than, say, the shape of one's head.

When we are struck by nature's beauty do we not find ourselves prompted by the spectacle to reflect on something "behind" what we in fact see? It needn't be anything as specific as a Divinity; some kind of vague sense of order or harmony will suffice—an appreciation, if not for the way the natural system was designed, at least for the way in which its elements have over the eons negotiated a settlement among themselves. Apart from this a beautiful field is just grass and dirt.

And where works of art are concerned, if we all agreed, on the spot, to abandon the use of expressionist terminology in characterizing where their import lies, we would be virtually speechless for months or years, until we could manage to devise some new content-neutral vocabulary. In short, the expressionist aesthetic is immensely appealing, and even if it should encounter certain difficulties when its principal theses and presumptions are laid side by side, it nevertheless continues to strike us as being a doctrine well worth taking the trouble to preserve. In the chapters which follow we will observe the variety of stratagems that were called upon in order to maintain some form or another of expressionism.

CHAPTER FOUR

ACADEMIC FOLLOWERS

Having been educators by profession, both Cousin and Jouffroy were assured an audience for their philosophical views—each year, in fact, brought them a fresh group of auditors. Understandably, then, the Scottish tradition did not terminate with them. But each member of an audience brings something of his own attitudes, antecedently formed; in addition, the intellectual context within which a philosophical outlook dwells is continually in flux, and so a theory which persists through time will naturally adjust itself to accord with new environing circumstances. We have already observed how dynamics of this sort were at work in shaping the thought of Cousin and Jouffroy. Transformations in the commonsense philosophical outlook in general, and in expressionist aesthetics in particular, continued, therefore, to be generated.

Many students of Cousin and Jouffroy went on to enjoy academic careers of their own; many, of course, did not. In this chapter I examine the manner in which the expressionist doctrine was treated by several of their students who remained within academia. Receiving attention are Adolphe Garnier, Charles Lévêque, Emile Saisset, Alexis Chassang, Joseph Tissot, Francisque Bouillier and Philibert Damiron. Among this group, it was Lévêque who produced what would have to be considered a major work in aesthetics. The others expressed views which exhibit their dependence on the Scottish tradition, and naturally as educators they exerted their influence pedagogically; but it was Lévêque who planted in the literature of the mid-nineteenth century a work of substance and polish. Accordingly, I devote to Lévêque what would appear to be a disproportionate amount of attention. It is only disproportionate in length, however; in terms of relative importance it accurately represents his stature within the tradition.

1. *Adolphe Garnier*

Garnier was by all accounts, including his own, Jouffroy's most devoted pupil. "I was, to Jouffroy," he observed, "like an adopted child, . . . in attendance at his first and at his final lesson."¹ In 1838 Garnier was named professor of philosophy at the Ecole normale; he moved to a chair in philosophy at the Sorbonne in 1845 and then again to the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques in 1860, assuming the position vacated by Tocqueville. His principal writings include a *Précis de philosophie* (1830), a *Critique de la philosophie de Thomas Reid* (1840), and, his major work, a three volume (5 book) *Traité des facultés de l'âme*, which first appeared in 1852.² And it will be remembered that it was he who edited and brought to publication Cousin's course of 1818 on *Du vrai*.

As a philosopher, Garnier was sometimes said to be "more Scottish than the Scots," a remark testifying to the extent to which he followed the method of introspective, psychological observation employed by Reid and adopted and developed by Jouffroy. Garnier too looked to Bacon as the thinker who set scientific investigation on its proper path, and saw Baconian methods as being equally applicable to the external, material realm and the internal, spiritual realm. With Jouffroy, however, it will be remembered that this latter realm was judged to be under the dominance of our active faculty, that is to say, our will.³ Garnier aims to provide an interpretation of the soul which includes within it elements that do not fall under the direct dominion of the will: "We endeavor to show that an involuntary intelligence must be attributed to the soul, along with the inclinations, passions, and a motive faculty distinct from the will" (FA; I, xxxi).

¹ Adolphe Garnier, "Sur les travaux philosophiques de M. Jouffroy," in *Collège de France et Facultés: Discours d'ouverture*, vol. 5. (Paris: Imprimerie Panckoucke, 1842), 4-5.

² Adolphe Garnier, *Traité des facultés de l'âme*, 3 vols. (Paris: Librairie de L. Hachette & Cie, 1852). His treatment of aesthetic matters occurs in vol. 1, 233-95, under the general heading "Les inclinations qui se rapportent à des objets non personnels." Subsequent references to this work will appear in the text, referring to the book as FA, followed by the volume number in Roman numerals, then the page number.

³ See above, Chap. 3, Sect. 1.2.

In his *Traité* Garnier gives considerable attention to aesthetic questions, thus becoming the first philosopher in the Scottish tradition subsequent to Jouffroy to do so. The interpretation of art and beauty which he puts forward conforms in its basic outlines to the others we have examined here. Sensible elements of the beautiful, he holds, “only become beautiful when they function as external signs of an intelligible or moral beauty” (FA; I, 234). Therefore when we speak of grandeur, say, or symmetry as being beautiful, we do so because of the manner in which these qualities suggest something noble at work behind them, producing them. As such, grandeur is “a sign of intellectual or moral power” (FA; I, 234), while symmetric forms “are marks of an intelligence which conceives and seeks out unity” (FA; I, 235).

Actually, certain aspects of Garnier’s aesthetics—doctrines which he holds and doctrines which he refrains from holding—make his, of all the theories influenced by the Scottish school, the one most faithful to the original version. For one thing, beyond simply accepting the expression theory, he is the only one who troubles to underscore the point—a point, recall, which was of vital importance to Reid—that beauty is properly attributed to the beautiful object, and not to the experiencing subject: “one must not confuse the quality in the object with the pleasure or love that it stimulates in our soul; . . . the pleasure comes from beauty, not beauty from pleasure” (FA; I, 290). Further, unlike both Cousin and Jouffroy (and others to follow), he makes no room anywhere in his account for the concept—or for *a* concept—of the ideal. Neither, of course, did Reid. It was Cousin who first labored to harmonize some notion of the ideal with expressionism. Garnier shows the down-to-earth quality of his thinking in forgoing any such metaphysical adventurism (although the invisible powers that he and Reid take for granted can hardly be thought to be metaphysically neutral). And finally, one might be a bit surprised to discover that Garnier makes no mention, either, of the role of sympathy in aesthetic experience. Jouffroy, of course, stressed that it was a necessary component in our apprehension of beauty, and since it is a psychological phenomenon, not a metaphysical hypothesis, the endorsement of such a power would not really run afoul of Garnier’s methodological commitments. But just the same, it is absent from his theory.

Two points on which an expressionist theory with theistic commitments is very sensitive receive Garnier's attention, and though they certainly do not thereby achieve resolution, they do merit consideration here. One such point concerns the ugly. Jouffroy, as we have just seen, found ugliness in nature to arise from an *absence* of vital force.⁴ Garnier locates it is the *presence* of such features as disproportion, disorder, discord: elements which we find threatening to the moral order (FA; I, 276). Such an approach may be more faithful to our experience of ugliness, as genuinely ugly things are often more assertive, more commanding of our attention—whether we like it or not—than beautiful things. But within the larger theoretical framework, ugliness in nature remains just as problematic for Garnier as for Jouffroy and the others, for since nature is the expression of the divine consciousness, how, we want to know, can the supreme being manifest itself in such negative ways and still remain supreme?

The second point concerns where beauty is properly thought to reside. As we have seen, Garnier affirms that it is found in the perceived object and not the perceiving subject, and he again points toward the object when he criticizes the Platonic view, which would have us turn our backs on the things of this world and seek true beauty only in certain forms or ideals. At the same time, he, like all his predecessors, complicates the situation by insisting that "reason is true beauty, and God, who is supreme reason, is therefore the supreme beauty" (FA; I, 286). Neither God nor reason is, properly speaking, an item in our experience. So with Garnier too, objects are rightly termed beautiful, *but only by extension*, while God alone, or the invisible component, at least, can literally and directly be termed beautiful. This remains for some time a matter of uneasiness in the theory.

One final contribution of Garnier's worth signaling in his hierarchic ordering of the arts (FA; I, 236-61). He bases this ordering on the differing degrees of expressive power which the various arts exhibit. On his estimate, architecture is most limited in its expressive capacity, while sculpture, being able to represent the human form, steps well beyond it. Painting is capable of greater expression yet, in being able to represent perspective and in adding

⁴ See above, Chap. 3, Sect. 2.6, Subsect. 2.

coloration (which sculpture lacks). Drama, or in general the arts of the word, are richest in expressive power, while music, somewhat curiously, is treated as an element which can enhance a drama, without being assigned a place of its own in the hierarchy.

It bears remarking that the characterization of Garnier's aesthetics I have provided is based on the 1852 edition of his *Traité*. In 1865 he produced a revised version of this work in which a number of changes can be noted, some involving no more than a difference in focus, others suggesting an alteration of perspective on certain fundamental issues. One change in focus, for example, involves his inclusion of a rather extensive historical review of aesthetic systems from Plato through Hegel; this stands in place of his hierarchic ordering of the arts. More substantially, instead of asserting, as we have seen, that sensible elements become beautiful "when they function as signs of an intelligible or moral beauty," the statement which takes the place of this one claims that such elements become beautiful "only when they transport pleasure into the mental sphere."⁵ This is a considerably different assertion indeed. Closely on its heels follows the claim that "color form and sound can be the object of an ideal conception which differs from any conceptions formed by memory, and which surpasses the real in beauty. But the beauty of the ideal only resides in the thoughts and the sentiments it expresses." This too leads in a direction, if not unfamiliar to Jouffroy and especially Cousin, at least quite afiel of anything Reid held. In short, then, I have focussed on the 1852 version of Garnier's *Traité* because that is the version which stands squarely in the Scottish tradition. In the later edition the marks of this tradition are only faintly visible.

2. Charles Lévêque

Lévêque was a protege of Cousin who taught Greek and Roman philosophy at the Collège de France beginning in 1856, and received an appointment to the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques in 1865. A year which he had spent in Athens from 1847-48

⁵ Adolphe Garnier, *Traité des facultés de l'âme*, 3 vols., 2nd Edition (Paris: Librairie de L. Hachette & Cie, 1865), 197. Succeeding quotation, same page.

undoubtedly influenced greatly his preferences in art and contributed to the shaping of his aesthetic theory, although undeniably he must have gone there armed at the outset with certain predilections which his experiences would have confirmed.

In 1861 his two-volume work *La Science du beau, étudiée dans ses principes, dans ses applications, et dans son histoire* was published, after the manuscript had received numerous academic prizes—awarded, specifically, by the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques, the Académie française, and the Académie des Beaux-Arts.⁶ It can be surmised that being Cousin's protégé did not work to his disadvantage in this regard. Lévêque published numerous other smaller pieces on art and aesthetics, the most noteworthy of these being a collection of essays entitled *Le Spiritualisme dans l'art*.⁷

My examination of Lévêque's aesthetics proceeds along the following lines. First I give some consideration to the relationship in which Lévêque stood to Reid and the commonsense tradition in general. Following that I sketch the basic elements of his theory, taking note both of those elements which he drew from Reid, Cousin and Jouffroy, and of those which either derived from other sources or can be attributed to Lévêque himself. Finally, I critically evaluate the expressionist doctrine at this next stage of its development.

2.1 *Le Sens Commun*

Lévêque appeals to commonsense early and often in his *Science du beau*, especially when seeking to ground the metaphysical tenets of his aesthetic system. This would seem to place him, so far as his methodology is concerned, squarely in the Reidean tradition, and considering the praise he heaps upon Jouffroy and his *Cours*, it is not unreasonable to infer that this is something of his intent. However,

⁶ Charles Lévêque, *La Science du beau, étudiée dans ses principes, dans ses applications, et dans son histoire*, 2 vols. (Paris: Auguste Durand, 1861). The work was then slightly revised and published under the title *La Science du beau, ses principes, ses applications et son histoire* (Paris: A. Durand & Pedone-Lauriel, 1872). The second edition (humbly) contains mention of the several awards in an appendix. It is to this second edition that references in the present work are made, incorporating them into the text by referring to the book as SB, and following that with the volume number in Roman numerals, then the page number.

⁷ Charles Lévêque, *Le Spiritualisme dans l'art* (Paris: Germer Baillière, 1864).

when we contrast what the principles of commonsense signified to Reid with the manner in which Lévêque appeals to commonsense (*le sens commun*) or to "the man of commonsense" (*l'homme de bonne sens*) some rather important differences can be detected.

For Reid, it will be recalled, a commonsense judgment was one which required no rational justification, for it carried its own evidence within itself. Indeed, such a judgment would not even permit of any rational justification, since this would imply that there were other principles, more basic yet, from which a commonsense judgment could be shown to follow. Commonsense judgements can be recognized and elucidated, but not demonstrated. There is no proving the causal interconnectedness of things for there is simply no way we can experience the world apart from this feature. In the aesthetic domain Reid affirmed that there were first principles governing taste and though he specified none in particular, the close alliance between taste and rationality at least gives some hint as to where they might lie.

Where beauty is concerned, Lévêque's common man is made to assent to a much more contestable set of propositions than Reid would ever have been comfortable with. For example, "my intelligence [this is what the common man is taken to affirm] believes that there is beauty in the world" (SB; I, 5). This should be unobjectionable to Reid. "My intelligence knows what the characteristics of beauty are, and what are those of ugliness" (SB; I, 5). If "knowing the characteristics" means "being able to recognize," this too might be acceptable, though it is not in fact obvious that this is how Lévêque intends the phrase, and neither is it obvious that this or the previous assertion would count, for Reid, as any sort of principle of commonsense. "The beautiful . . . arouses in me a type, an ideal, against which I measure the various degrees of beauty" (SB; I, 5): this is surely more theory laden than Reid would have allowed. When the man of commonsense says (in words to this effect, at least) "the beautiful, in acting on our sensibility, produces an agreeable sentiment which is other than the sensation—an intellectual delight, elevated, noble and disinterested" (SB; I, 6), we have definitely moved well beyond that realm of principles too fundamental even to permit of rational justification. And when this common man "glimpses and affirms, beneath the forms and characteristics of the beautiful, the existence of an essential, internal principle," here too,

it would seem, there is too much disputable metaphysical baggage to allow it to pass as a principle of commonsense.

Obviously there are, in these initial theses which Lévêque forwards, some elements, and some close kin to elements of Reid's aesthetics. But many of the judgments that Reid affirms, both in his aesthetics and elsewhere in his philosophy, fail to qualify as principles of commonsense—first principles, after all, are only starting points, and from any such starting points a chain of truths of indefinite length can be shown to follow. Lévêque's "commonsense elucidations" of most of the above assertions would, on Reid's account, fall short of adequacy.

Further, Lévêque repeatedly seeks support for his views by showing how they align with what people are disposed to say about works of art or beautiful things. In generating his list of the eight characteristics of beauty, for example, he will say such things as: "This variety, is it one of the elements of [the lily's] beauty? Everyone says it is; I say so just as everyone does" (SB; I, 32). Or, of the proportions of the lily, "everyone measures in a glance the relations among the dimensions of the plant . . . and all affirm that therein lies one of the traits of its beauty" (SB; I, 38). And of color, "*no one disputes* that, all things being equal, the lily with the most strikingly white flower and the richest green leaves will for all that be judged the most beautiful" (SB; I, 42).⁸

As we have seen, allowing ordinary discourse to give answers to philosophical questions was a method employed often by Jouffroy, and certainly Reid himself kept closely in touch with ordinary language, even if he did not allow it to cast the deciding ballot on philosophical questions.⁹ On this issue too, therefore, Lévêque gives the appearance of carrying forth the Scottish tradition. But on this issue as well as the previous one, appearance doesn't wholly coincide with reality. More often than not, his appeals to our linguistic dispositions seem not to give testimony to beliefs which people must hold—as commonsense in its purest form would have it—but merely to beliefs which people happen to hold (which may or may not be well-taken). And in a number of cases it seems unlikely that any

⁸ Emphasis mine.

⁹ See above, Chap. 1, Sect. 2.3, Subsect. 2; and Chap. 3, Sect. 2.1.

common man would assent to (or even comprehend) the views attributed to him.

I conclude from the foregoing that while Lévêque can still be assigned a place within the Scottish metaphilosophical tradition, his own understanding of that tradition is not immune from error, and this led to a definite diminution of philosophical rigor in his work. If I might indulge in a bit of speculation on this score, it could well be that Lévêque was making a conscious effort to align himself with the commonsense tradition out of fealty to his mentor Cousin. Throughout the previous decade, Cousin had, for political reasons, been insisting that his spiritualist philosophy was closely allied to the Scottish commonsense approach, and not, as was broadly alleged, the German absolute idealists. In Chapter Two, it will be recalled, I argued in support of this very position. Accordingly, in his preface Lévêque cites Cousin's lectures of 1817 and 1818 as being the first "modern" treatment of the beautiful in France—lectures which came too early to be marked by any German influence (other than Leibniz). And he is careful to attach Jouffroy's later treatment of the same issue to Cousin's 1818 lectures, reminding the reader that they stood therefore "outside of any influence from the lessons on aesthetics which Hegel presented in Berlin from 1820-29, and which weren't collected and published till later yet" (SB; I, xv-xvii). Given the importance of Cousin and Jouffroy to his own work, Lévêque might be mounting from the very outset a preemptive case against any charges of pantheism by stressing his apparent ties to commonsense philosophy.

2.2 *Aesthetics, Proper*

When we come to consider aesthetic matters, it is easy to see that the elements which were basic to Reid's outlook remain in place in Lévêque's. Indeed, he calls Reid "le Socrate de l'esthétique moderne" for his having "opened the most secure paths and laid in place several of the most fecund principles of the science of the beautiful" (SB; II, 495-96). And Lévêque's enumeration of the various lacunae in Reid's theory—that "it lacks a metaphysic of sufficient breadth and depth; it wants an analysis of the concept of the ideal, some insight into aesthetic activity, a study of the ugly, the pretty, the ridiculous, a theory of the arts" (SB; II, 495-96)—defines

quite sharply those very areas where his own refinement and development took place.

Beauty is still held, by Lévêque, to involve an act of expression, in which something visible (or audible) acts as a sign of a certain invisible something, a "*puissance vitale*," as he most commonly calls it. In addition, he adheres to the view—Reid's, of course—that the object which is referred to as beautiful possesses only a "derived" beauty (*la beauté empruntée*), while the invisible power, which the object gives sign of, is the proper and direct recipient of the ascription.

1. "*The lily*." The first portion of Lévêque's *Science du beau* is devoted to the hypothetical contemplation of a lily, from which he draws a list of eight elements which anything beautiful will be said to possess (SB; I, 16-54). The list itself contains few surprises, amounting almost to the union of the sets of properties singled out by most aesthetic theories as central constituents of beauty. It includes grandeur, unity, variety, harmony, proportion, color, grace and suitability (*convenance*). Perhaps to enhance the credibility of these eight, he explicitly rules out a few others—magnificence, simplicity, elegance, and majesty. Or to be more precise, he absorbs them into one or another of the Original Eight. These, then, are divided into two major categories in each of which one dominant idea prevails. One such category is that of "grandeur," which contains itself, of course, plus unity and variety; the other is "order," under which fall harmony, proportion, color, grace and suitability (SB; I, 50-54).

More important, perhaps, than the enumeration of these eight elements is the way in which Lévêque interprets each one. In effect, what he does is to provide for each element an interpretation which harmonizes with the basic tenets of the expression theory he is to be developing. Though some might see in this method of proceeding a certain sinister circularity,¹⁰ the more indulgent reader might be grateful simply to see various concepts, long associated with aesthetic analyses, brought within a specifically expressionist framework. "Unity," "proportion," "color," for example, seem to be notions which would be more at home in a formalist theory, where it might be held that the perception of such qualities produces a disinterested

¹⁰ This very point is made by Emile Saisset. See ahead, p. 177.

pleasure of some sort. On Lévêque's account, though, unity is no mere formal property of an object; rather, "in the unity of form, that which is really and properly beautiful is the *unique* action of a *single* and *selfsame* '*puissance vitale*'" (SB; I, 29).¹¹ Of proportion: "what is beautiful in well proportioned forms . . . is not the proportions by themselves, but the measured actions of the *puissance vitale* which these forms manifest" (SB; I, 40). And of color, "it is also as an expression of life revealed through some form that colors become beautiful" (SB; I, 43). Surely Reid did provide one or two examples of this mode of interpretation, and Garnier, as we just noted, carried it a bit further. Lévêque, however, is much more thorough and systematic in this regard than any of his predecessors.

2. *The ideal*. The concept of the ideal plays a larger role in Lévêque's aesthetics than in any of those we have examined to this point. For Cousin ideal beauty constituted one of the attributes of the absolute (along with truth and goodness), and it also served, in some definite if unspecifiable way, as a guide to artistic creation and appreciation. Jouffroy appealed to the notion only in this latter context, forgoing any metaphysical employment of the concept. Reid made no use whatsoever of the ideal.

What Lévêque does is to introduce an intermediary level of ideals—a great multitude of them—constituting the types or species of things we find in the world; animals, plants and minerals alike. Speaking of his lily, he says that it is "indispensable to note that the visible harmony is only beautiful as a reflection of the invisible harmony, and this latter as a reflection of the absolutely ideal harmony" (SB; I, 36). For Cousin, of course, the invisible harmony *was* the absolute harmony. To look more closely at Lévêque's two-tiered approach,

this ideal harmony . . . is not born, will not perish, will never be altered. . . . [It] is for me the type of all the others. . . . But in judging aesthetically, I do not isolate this flower from its genus. . . . To refer to it as beautiful, I do not demand that it express the absolute, ideal harmony. . . . I know that for its type (*genre*) there is a maximal harmony. Thus the idea of type is associated, in my mind, to the idea of harmony which characterizes beauty. (SB; I, 36-37)

¹¹ Emphasis mine.

Cousin, let us keep in mind, never made any appeal to such an intermediate level of generic ideals—with him ideal beauty or just the ideal was always referred to in the singular.

Surely Lévêque's familiarity with Plato's philosophy made him feel comfortable with the notion of a realm of such ideals, but it is undoubtedly Schelling whose thinking prompted him to bring this notion to bear in the aesthetic domain. We find Lévêque acknowledging as much near the end of his work, where he says (in the same lefthanded way that both Cousin and Jouffroy acknowledged their indebtedness to Reid): "the reader will have remarked that, on most secondary points, the views of Schelling confirm those which have been developed in our chapters on art in general" (SB; II, 505). In fact, in light of the pervasiveness of these ideals throughout his treatment of natural and human beauty, it would have to be said that Schelling's views "confirm" a good deal more than just Lévêque's *secondary* points concerning art.

Given the Platonic character of these ideals, it is only natural that their use in Lévêque's aesthetic theory would be assailable by all the standard criticisms that have been brought to bear against Platonic realism over the centuries. The forthcoming section on Saisset mentions some of the sharper of them, though on a number of points Saisset was beaten to the punch—as if in anticipation of Lévêque—by Jouffroy (CE, 60-62). For my own part I suggest that Reid's avoidance of any talk of ideals constitutes, not an oversight or a shortcoming, as Lévêque claimed, but a distinct virtue in his aesthetic theory.

3. *Art*. The larger portion of the second volume of Lévêque's *Science du beau* consists in a systematic application of the general principles enunciated in volume 1 to each of the several arts. Quite possibly Lévêque was aiming to provide, for spiritualist expressionism, an analysis of art which could take its place alongside Hegel's famous lectures. His results in fact show certain Hegelian overtones, as will soon be apparent.

Defining art as "the interpretation of the beauty of a soul, or of power in general, by means of their most expressive signs, that is to say, by means of their ideal forms" (SB; II, 8), Lévêque follows Cousin in affirming that art has no business setting for itself any moralistic, patriotic or religious ends: "the end of art," rather, is to "infuse into our souls the delectable emotions of the beautiful" (SB;

II, 14). He then claims that a “rank ordering” of the arts can be obtained, based on the following two contentions: (1) that the various souls or powers which are expressed through art differ with regard to the (spiritual) beauty which each possesses in and of itself, and (2) that the several arts differ with respect to their capacities to express spiritual content. It is the interaction between these two factors which makes possible such a rank ordering (SB; II, 14-18).

Architecture finds itself on the lowest levels, for it both works with a medium which is ponderous and rigid, and therefore limited in its expressive capacity, and expresses a content which also falls well short of being deeply spiritual, that being “the ordered power of inorganic matter, devoid of movement and of life” (SB; II, 15). Interestingly, though, Lévêque does attribute to architecture a certain limited power to express “something of the life, the customs and the character of the human soul or power which inhabits it” (SB; II, 51).¹² Close to architecture, for many of the same reasons, he places landscape gardening. Sculpture is a notch above architecture for it often deals with a highly refined content—human nature—but it does so just the same in a medium quite as limited as architecture. Painting enriches a bit the expressed content, being able to deal with a broader spectrum of emotions and ideas, but it advances considerably beyond sculpture in being a more flexible, versatile medium of expression. Music, Lévêque judges, is an even more powerful expressive medium, often eliciting a stronger response from its auditors than any other of the arts, but its content is lacking in precision, in contrast with either painting or poetry. Poetry, naturally, enjoys the highest rank because of its unique blend of power and precision, which can be brought to bear in expressions of the noblest of sentiments.

Lévêque, it seems, shared something of Cousin’s disaffection for the arts of his own time, a tendency perhaps enhanced by his stay in Athens. In sculpture, for example, he believed the best one could do would be to do as well as the Greeks—even Michaelangelo could not claim otherwise.¹³ His painter of preference was Raphael, while

¹² This notion finds an echo in recent times in Suzanne Langer’s contention that the basic abstraction pertinent to architecture is that of an *ethnic domain*. See her *Feeling and Form* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1953), 95.

¹³ Lévêque, *Le Spiritualisme*, p. 66.

among French painters he favored Poussin.¹⁴ Mozart was Lévêque's preferred composer, although he seems to have been one of those listeners, very common in the nineteenth century, who heard only Mozart's Apollonian side. One wonders where such a listener—or where his consciousness at least—would disappear to during a performance of the andante to the A Major piano concerto (K. 488). In literature, Corneille is treated by him practically as a recent dramatist.

Lévêque does at least devote considerable attention to Beethoven, who flourished in the same century as Lévêque himself did, but when he elegizes a contemporary sculptor, Charles Simart, it is evident that his respect is due to the sculptor's efforts to recapture in his own works the spirit of Greek art.¹⁵ Indeed, he speaks of the art of his own time as somehow having gone astray—“*les écarts de l'art moderne*.”¹⁶ In short, it seems that in his efforts to arrive at an aesthetic for all time, Lévêque could not manage to attune himself to the arts of his own time.

2.3 *Criticism; Replies; Criticism of Replies*

At this stage in the development of expressionist aesthetics, the very axis of the theory consists in the alleged relationship between a thing's visible exterior and its invisible interior. This relationship, it turns out, also constitutes the principal problem area for the theory. Lévêque is very sensitive to these problems, and he devotes considerable attention to their resolution. Let us consider how he proposes to go about this, examining first his treatment of human beauty and ugliness, then turning our attention to these same issues as they arise in the natural realm.

1. *Human Beauty*. Within the human domain, Lévêque formulates the problem in this fashion: How can it be that Socrates is ugly and Alexander is handsome? If the outer man really expresses the inner man, then Socrates' beautiful soul should show through, shouldn't it, while Alexander's exterior should bespeak only his bellicose ambitiousness? Consequently, should we examine their respective busts in the museum (presuming them to have been

¹⁴ Ibid. See his essay in this work “Le spiritualisme dans la peinture,” 89-143.

¹⁵ Ibid., See his essay in this work “Un sculpteur spiritualiste,” 61-71.

¹⁶ Ibid., 150.

accurately chiseled), even if we don't draw close enough to read the descriptive labels below each, we will handily be able to judge who is who. And, never having met either man, our judgment will be based on our assessment of which appears to be the nobler countenance.

A principal element in Lévêque's response to this problem is his partitioning of the interior force of man, calling one part—that part which serves our animal needs—the *force vitale*, and the other—that which is responsible for our thinking, feeling and willing—the soul (*âme*). In truth, he does not assert this division as if it were a psychological fact. He says, instead, that it is “a singularly delicate question, to the solution of which modern science has not yet applied all the experimental resources available to it” (SB; I, 285). And he withholds final judgment, being, he claims, “a faithful disciple of Descartes [who] will accept and proclaim as certain only that which has been plainly evidenced” (SB; I, 285). Nevertheless, he proceeds to *treat* the division as if it were an established fact.

From this perspective, then, the *force vitale* is seen to manifest itself in “a healthy and vigorous body, well proportioned and well shaped . . . following the plan, type or model . . . of the human body” (SB; I, 286). Accordingly, the attributes which provoke our judgment that someone is ugly will result from some insufficiency or disorder in the *force vitale*.

When we come to consider the thinking, willing soul, different criteria, we learn, must be applied, for “between the ugliness of the body and that of the soul, on the one hand, and between physical and moral beauty, on the other, there is as a matter of fact no necessary relationship” (SB; I, 301). What is the case, rather, is that “a soul possessing all beauties, loving and affirming only the beautiful, the good and the true, can reside within a deformed body and hide behind an ugly face. A soul as ugly as can be, . . . can be united to a charming body and . . . the most admirable head” (SB; I, 301). While Lévêque *generally* looks to the body from the neck down, so to speak, as the principal instrument for the manifestation of the *force vitale*, and to the head, especially the face, as revelatory of the soul, this last quotation shows that he is quite aware that a (physically) healthy person will exhibit his vigor facially, as well as bodily, and that a soul can and will make its attitudes felt through any part of the body, not just the face. Still, he draws a terminological

distinction between *physical* beauty, which applies to the manifestation of the *force vitale*, and *moral* or *expressive* beauty, which correlates with our spiritual nature.

Having separated off the soul (*âme*) from the *force vitale* in this fashion, Lévêque then attempts to homogenize them by claiming that through it all, there remains an ideal type (*exemplaire idéal*) of humankind (SB; I, 303), which consists in a propitious blend of the two faculties (or the two aspects of the one faculty). Therefore, even if in many particular instances the estimate we can make of what a person's look and behavior intimate regarding his inner self will be muddled by the interference of one set of expressive signs with another, still there will be other instances where this discord is minimal, and such instances as these are the ones that will give us some indication of where the ideal type lies.

As something of a corollary to this notion of an ideal type, Lévêque introduces the concept of expressive *suitability*. Having moved away from the view that the body is the immediate and necessary expression of the soul, and come instead to view this link as contingent, the body, as thus construed, acts almost like a shell (my characterization) through which the soul must at times struggle to manifest itself. As a result, it turns out that "not all faces are equally *suitable* for the manifestation of moral beauty" (SB; I, 67). Instead, "an ideally regular face expresses beauty of character much more faithfully than any other type of face" (SB; I, 70). And clearly, one with pronounced peculiarities, such as Socrates', would be disadvantaged from the outset. "Mozart observed," he remarks, "that the same music would sound better on a better instrument" (SB; I, 306), implying that a trait such as moral resolve would show up more clearly on a regular face than on a distorted one. Presumably, the closer one came to instantiating the *exemplaire idéal*, the more effectively would his exterior express his interior.

Relating these contentions back to the Socrates-Alexander question with which we began, we would have to say that we find Alexander to be more handsome than Socrates for one, or some, or all of the following reasons: (1) Alexander was more fully endowed with *force vitale* than Socrates; (2) he was configured in a more nearly ideal manner than Socrates; (3) his appearance was more conducive to a clear expression of his inner self than Socrates'. Actually, "1" is probably false, "2" is only as adequate as Lévêque's

notion of the ideal, while “3” would either lead us to call Alexander ugly (for his moral repugnance would be plainly visible), or it would lead us back to “1.” Lévêque’s efforts, however, deserve a more detailed critique.

For one thing, the dividing of the self is a much more hazardous move, theoretically, than Lévêque seems to envision. There do not, for example, appear to be any constraints in place to prevent such subdivision from running rampant. Why should not the *force vitale* and all its consequent attributes manifest themselves in one way in an individual’s cardio-pulmonary system, but in another way in his gastric functions? In his endocrine glands, but not his epidermis. And why should not certain powers of one’s soul—its power of discursive reason; of abstraction; its chess playing ability—assert their excellence in opposition to its other, perhaps moral capacities? Obviously there do exist people with good hearts, bad stomachs, blotchy skin, who play chess well but don’t repay debts regularly. However, is Lévêque really prepared to assign a separate aesthetic predicate to each and every one of these functions and faculties? If so, such a dispersal of the *force vitale* would seem to reduce the notion to vacuity, at least as an aesthetic explanatory device.

Secondly, if the *force vitale* and the soul work sometimes in harmony but often in opposition, then since the two can both express themselves through one and the same “organ” (the eyes, the hands, one’s overall posture), it follows that we will often find ourselves obliged to call the same thing both beautiful and ugly. There is not much evidence in the language that we are willing to do this. Those beautiful spies James Bond is always becoming entangled with are “beautiful but treacherous,” not “beautiful but ugly”; a person might well be described as “not very attractive but very nice,” but is not likely to be called “ugly but beautiful.” However, when evil makes itself felt in appearance it does not coexist alongside physical beauty: it crowds the latter right out. So those once beautiful blue eyes come to be seen as steely and menacing or inhuman, a smile turns sardonic—with no alteration whatsoever in facial configuration—and a strong muscular physique will take on the look of something akin to a deadly weapon. Likewise it is common to speak of someone whom we find unsightly at a superficial glance as a “beautiful man”—Gandhi, for example—once his character works its way into our perception of him. And even James Bond’s female nemeses

usually soften and show their more vulnerable, human side before the film ends, thus remaining beautiful without qualification (or they get shot).

Now if we stir into this already unhappy mix the thesis concerning the degree of efficacy with which certain features are capable of expressing particular states, even graver problems arise. The very thesis that there is a language of natural signs—an essential element in commonsense expressionism—is seriously threatened, for now, it turns out, we are called upon in any number of cases—indeed in *all* cases—not just to determine what state of mind a certain feature or aspect of a person is exhibiting, but to determine whether the feature in question is actually revealing that state, or is concealing that state while suggesting another perhaps contradictory state. And if what we are supposed to base our judgment upon is the feature itself—as it should be, if there is really a language of natural signs—this is going to be a tricky issue. Note, this is not the same problem as that which arises when we simply wonder whether someone is being sincere or is dissembling; that much (on the expression theory) should show up, on close scrutiny. Hypocrisy has its own natural signs. The problem to which Lévêque's analysis gives rise is that even the utmost in sincerity may not be able to make its way to the surface, being overpowered by other countervailing forces emanating from the other side of the self. Nothing short of exposure to a person's entire conduct of life would, on this account, enable us to determine his inner nature, so in fact we would not be reading such a person's character from his face or his body but from his deeds. To be sure, deeds are "external signs," but they are not anything like the kind of external signs to which an expression theory is committed.

More damaging yet to Lévêque's view is the fact that defects and irregularities of the physical sort are sometimes needed to elicit or reveal certain virtues. The severely handicapped person who makes a go of life and succeeds in achieving what his "normal" cohorts can't quite manage is lauded and appreciated precisely because of the way in which he has overcome his handicap. Were he less disadvantaged as a person, his achievements would be less laudable.

I am even tempted to argue for some negative correlation between a virtuous interior and a (superficially) agreeable exterior. The unattractive or disadvantaged person is almost forced in life to cultivate such virtues as patience, perseverance, even stoic resigna-

tion, since his more (superficially) attractive confreres generally receive preference in social circumstances and in the workplace. The well-formed individual need not pursue his talents or perfect his character, for life smiles upon him as he is. All he develops is his vanity. I don't insist upon this point, but it is far from outrageous.

All these negative considerations need not spell doom for expressionism in general, though they certainly indicate that it is not a simple thesis to defend. One point in favor of the theory, and for which Lévêque deserves credit for recognizing, is that to the extent that we do in however many instances register a certain discord between an individual's face, say, and his character, this seems to confirm that we do take certain facial configurations to be expressive of certain states of mind. If we had no disposition at all to "read" faces in this fashion, we would never come to feel and acknowledge that any such discord actually exists. And I believe we do possess such a tendency; and I suspect that such a tendency is even universal, hence natural.

What enables us to "warm right up" to certain individuals, what prompts us to stand coolly apart from others on first confrontation, if it is not a quick read of the disposition of their features, or more likely, of the attitude their entire body projects? What is called love at first sight is not, in its purest cases, a simple-minded attraction for, say, blond hair and blue eyes, but an inference that this surface upon which one's eyes have just fallen expresses depths of a sort with which one will prove to be in sympathy. Surely our image makers in Hollywood fall into Lévêque's rut when they relentlessly cast handsome individuals in heroic roles, while inflicting the less attractive parts on the less attractive actors: James Bond vs. Goldfinger. But while this constitutes an abuse of this tendency—even a dangerous abuse, to the extent that it can create certain undesirable prejudices in an audience which they may well carry forth into life—and while it demonstrates a painful lack of subtlety on their part, an abuse of a tendency nevertheless stands as confirmation of the reality of that tendency. Often we err in our initial judgments; sometimes closer attention reveals an insincerity we at first overlooked—a slight catch in the laugh, a smile that collapses too quickly—but where we can be wrong, we accordingly are assured of at least the possibility of being right. And this is all the theory

needs. There is thus some sound philosophizing in Lévêque on this issue, but it is quite overwhelmed by some more questionable theses.

One derives the impression that Lévêque might have fared better by simply staying within the confines of the tradition as enunciated by Reid and Cousin. The latter argued "the face of Socrates, if one abstracts it from the soul that animates it, is vulgar, ugly, an anomaly among Grecian types; this face becomes sublime when the philosopher, from the depths of his prison, converses with his disciples on the immortality of the soul, forgives the jailer who brings the hemlock to him, and peacefully prepares himself to die" (VBB, 256). This view, however, is attributed by Lévêque to "the empiricists" (SB; I, 64), company in which Cousin would be quite surprised to find himself. Instead, Lévêque seems to have pursued certain lines suggested by Jouffroy, and their pursuit, far from remedying any theoretical discomforts, succeeds merely in compounding them.

2. *Natural Beauty*. The question of natural beauty is hampered by the same problems that we have seen arising with respect to human beauty. In addition, though, there are a few twists which are peculiar to it, and which deserve to be noted. For one thing, while we have at our disposal any amount of non-aesthetic testimony as to Socrates' nobleness, against which we can check and confirm his aesthetic traits, or which at least invites us to "look closer" to find his real beauty, nature offers us only its surface, and nothing more. As such, Lévêque's loosening of the bond between body and spirit, as damaging as it was in the human domain, becomes positively bizarre when applied to nature. He claims, for example, that in the case of the lion the inner-outer relationship is at its most accurate and appropriate, while with the elephant, in whose crude form is housed (allegedly) a noble interior, it is at its worst (SB; I, 332-33). One wonders, from this, just what *should* an elephant look like? And where could we possibly go in order to find out? (Perhaps we should arrange to have two zoos side by side, one to house and exhibit the animals as we find them, the other to depict what their "real" interior being declares they *ought* to look like.)

Within a theory which holds that God expresses himself through nature, the ugly in nature poses a special problem—in effect, the aesthetic correlate to the problem of evil in theology. Lévêque gives this matter considerable attention—much more than any of his

predecessors. In the end, though, he comes up with not one, but a pair of answers; and the two of them simply do not cohere. One approach follows from his notion of ideal beauty, or rather, ideal *beauties*. Along this particular line, something comes to be seen as more beautiful to the extent that it draws closer to being an embodiment of the ideal appropriate to it, while as it removes itself from this ideal its beauty diminishes. This is presented early on in Lévêque, when he is drawing the basic elements of his position out of the remarks that the man of commonsense supposedly could make. There it is judged that "the character and forms that [this man] calls beautiful . . . are only beautiful for him *to that very degree* that [the essential and internal principle of beauty] is present beneath these forms, and expressed by them" (SB; I, 8).¹⁷ Thus since beauty is a question of degree, ugliness would be also, and would consist in the *privation* of beauty, with the ugly object standing at a great remove from its appropriate ideal.

Thoroughly compatible with this ideal approach, though a bit different in formulation, is an interpretation of nature which bears clearly the imprint of Leibniz. Lévêque claims

there are thus active, immaterial forces throughout matter [Jouffroy, note, always spoke of '*la force*' in the singular], . . . but the action of these forces is not equally powerful in all bodies [just as monads, for Leibniz, perceived at varying levels of efficacy and comprehensiveness], . . . and it is in their varying degrees of active power that we measure the beauty of inanimate bodies. (SB; I, 351-52)

And obviously, since animate, non-human nature is governed by "infallible instinct" (SB; I, 297), a similar gradation should follow from the distribution of active powers there, too, following Leibniz's hierarchy which rises from sensation through apperception and consciousness to rationality. Since the ugly is seen as the opposite of the beautiful, it is easy to arrive again at the same conclusion that we did above, namely, that ugliness consists in the privation of beauty.¹⁸

¹⁷ Emphasis mine.

¹⁸ And, we might add, given the Leibnizean tone, the whole System of Nature would still be supremely beautiful precisely because of the infinite diversity of its constituent forces, all unified in the divine consciousness. Lévêque never got quite this far, though.

Lévêque does argue elsewhere, however, that the ugly is not pure negation, but has something positive and definite about it: "the ugly is a force acting or living with a certain power" (SB; I, 202-206), but acting "in grave disorder" or "in a manner contrary to its nature and its law," thereby "realizing by all its powers all the disorder that it can without perishing immediately." The question of degree applies here as well as above, but on this interpretation it is "the degree of disorder according to which *la force* lives and acts."

Of these two versions of the ugly, the first fits the overall system better, since it is easier to see how God would have willed a world rich in variety than one with certain of its elements gone berserk. The second, however, seems more phenomenologically accurate, as ugliness does have something very aggressive about it. But in constructing a philosophical system, two views which conflict with one another are decidedly not better than one.

I conclude from this discussion that Lévêque's *Science du beau* furthers the commonsense expressionist tradition by offering a study exhibiting considerably greater organization and stylistic refinement than its principal predecessor—Jouffroy's *Cours*—and which features a richer discussion of a number of issues, principally, the application of the theory to the arts. If it suffers most from any one thing, that would be the manner in which the ideal becomes particularized and worked into the heart of the theory. If there is a virtue even to this, however, it is that it kept critical minds at work on the problem until a more satisfactory version of the theory could be worked out.

3. *Emile Saisset*

Saisset taught history of philosophy at the Ecole normale beginning in 1842, moved on to the Collège de France in 1843, and became, in 1862, a member of the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques at the Sorbonne. He authored an *Essai sur la philosophie et la religion au XIX siècle*, and an *Essai de philosophie religieuse*. His untimely death, coming but a year after his appointment to the Sorbonne, surely prevented his literary output from being more formidable.

In 1862, on the heels of the publication of Lévêque's *Science du beau*, Saisset wrote a piece for the *Revue des Deux Mondes* entitled,

"L'esthétique française: examen d'une nouvelle théorie du beau."¹⁹ It is principally a critical review of Lévêque's work, but as normally happens in extended critical writings, something of the author's own theoretical commitments emerges. In this instance, however, it would perhaps be better to speak of his metatheoretical commitments. Let us glance briefly at a few of them.

Saisset believed an aesthetic ought to be grounded in—and never should stray far away from—observable phenomena, and he chides those who slant their observations to make them line up better with their metaphysical presuppositions. Thus he asserts "I willingly distinguish in M. Lévêque's book that which derives from observation and that which belongs to his system—on one hand a natural, sincere psychology, on the other a psychology which is systematic and artificial. His true-to-life analyses cannot be praised enough. As for the rest, that is another matter."²⁰ And the rest, it turns out, constitutes a central and sizable portion of Lévêque's work. Indeed, Saisset argues that Lévêque's eight elementary characteristics of the beautiful are not the "simple psychological prologue" they are claimed to be. Instead they are already fully charged with the metaphysical outlook which the structure of the book might lead us to believe is not taken up until much later (in Chapter VI, to be precise).²¹

A second issue intimately connected with this first one concerns the role of idealization in artistic practice and theory. Saisset shows a distinct preference for an aesthetic theory which holds that art ought to deal with its subject matter in a realistic rather than an idealized manner. Consequently, we find him criticizing Winckelmann and Quatremère de Quincy, and Lévêque with them, for "confounding the domain of metaphysics with that of art," claiming "metaphysics moves from the particular to the general, . . . art proceeds quite otherwise. It aims not at some abstract quality but at a determinate perfection. . . . The great masters would tell you that

¹⁹ This was incorporated into a book, along with another article from the same *Revue*, which latter provided the title of the book: *L'Ame et la vie* (Paris: Germer Baillière, 1864).

²⁰ *L'Ame et la vie*, 114.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 134-35.

above all, the human form must be alive and for it to be alive, it must be individual and, consequently, determinate."²²

This discussion arises in Saisset's examination of Lévêque's treatment of the source of beauty and the contrast between beautiful and ugly things. Agreement with an ideal, it is held, renders something or someone beautiful; deviation from this ideal leads to ugliness. Against this, Saisset argues—quite cogently—that even if we just consider human beauty alone, we will find that it manifests itself in such an immense variety of ways, across ethnic groups, ages, sexes, even social classes, that the notion of one ideal type is insupportable. It is just hopelessly discordant with the judgments which we actually do make. At the same time, the postulation of an indefinitely large multitude of ideal types would bring us even closer to having a different ideal governing each beautiful individual. And that pretty much reduces the concept of the ideal to vacuity.²³ All this argumentation serves to reinforce his position that prior metaphysical commitments should not be given precedence over sound, sensitive observation.

Saisset makes it quite clear through all this that he regards Jouffroy's method of analysis as the superior approach. Lévêque is praised when he remains true to it, and faulted when he deviates from it. He thereby makes apparent his dissatisfaction with the kind of metaphysical exploration which Cousin brought to the issue—though of course he does so without ever taking Cousin's name in vain. All this would seem to put him more in line with Reid's approach, since Reid, in drawing his aesthetic theory, was inclined to make sparing use of any metaphysical colorations.

In the end, though, Saisset takes no particular theory to be the final, definitive one—the theory to end all theorizing. Some bring more insight than others, some are richer than other in explanatory power, but “each new system will lead to a more profound critical understanding of the conditions essential to beauty.”²⁴

²² *Ibid.*, 125.

²³ *Ibid.*, 120-33.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 164.

4. Alexis Chassang

Chassang was maitre de conférences at the Ecole normale supérieure in 1868 when he wrote *Le Spiritualisme et l'idéal dans l'art et la poésie des grecs*.²⁵ It is a work devoted more to art history than to philosophy or aesthetics; nevertheless the position from which Chassang views Greek and Roman art is clearly in line with the one which Reid passed on to Cousin who converted it into orthodoxy. Given Chassang's frame of orientation, however, it is understandable that he steps over these individuals and presents Plato as the paradigmatic spiritualist thinker. He does praise Cousin, as being "one of the most eloquent defenders of modern spiritualism, [who] made of it the triple object of one of his courses ['du vrai, du beau, and du bien,' of course] and one of his books."²⁶ In addition, he remains in touch with Lévêque throughout his study, in particular for the latter's treatment of the ideal element in beauty. Still, it is principally as perpetuators in one way or another of Platonic aesthetic doctrines that Cousin and Lévêque are held in special esteem.

As with all the spiritualist thinkers there is a certain anti-materialist thrust to Chassang's work. He is the first to admit, however, that a study of spiritualist tendencies in ancient Greek and Roman art cannot count very heavily toward the refutation of a contemporary trend of thought. He is also forthcoming in crediting various other thinkers—Winckelmann, Quatremère de Quincy, Lévêque—with having undertaken important essays in the direction which he is presently pursuing. His study purports only to greater depth and thoroughness, but not to any special originality.

Chassang aims to bring out, through an analysis of many ancient works, how the doctrines basic to spiritualism—belief, for example, in the immateriality and immortality of the soul, and especially in the aesthetic doctrine that "physical beauty . . . is like a reflection of moral beauty"²⁷—pervade the art of antiquity. And taking the fascination with the grotesque and the ugly to be emblematic of a materialist approach (since, he reasons, ugliness is a highly individu-

²⁵ Alexis Chassang, *Le Spiritualisme et l'idéal dans l'art et la poésie des grecs* (Paris: Didier & Cie, 1868).

²⁶ Ibid., 14-15.

²⁷ Ibid., 20.

alized trait, and matter individuates, while beauty prompts us to see the ideal in the individual), he demonstrates, with the same thoroughness, that the Greeks “without absolutely banning the grotesque even from the art of drawing, . . . preserved their preference for classic beauty, which . . . as an ideal expression of life, will forever reign sovereign in the highest regions of art.”²⁸

5. *Lesser Figures*

Certain individuals deserve acknowledgement for having been important members of the spiritualist tradition who did touch upon aesthetic matters in their writings. Yet since none of them went so far as to elaborate an expressionist theory, and since that is the guiding thread of the present study, I shall do little more here than mention them and their works.

5.1 *Joseph Tissot*

Tissot spent most of his career at the university in Dijon, as professor of philosophy and ultimately as dean. He produced the first French translations of many of Kant’s works in addition to a text on ethics and a biography of Jouffroy. Under Jouffroy’s direction he wrote a dissertation entitled *Du beau, particulièrement en littérature*,²⁹ which contains as a central feature a lengthy discussion of the role of the ideal in art.

5.2 *Francisque Bouillier*

Bouillier spent most of his career at Lyon, as professor of philosophy and later as dean of the faculty there. He wrote an important *Histoire de la philosophie cartésienne*, and another work entitled *De la conscience en psychologie et en morale*. It is in his book *Du plaisir et de la douleur* where he touches on aesthetic matters, as our sentiment of the beautiful is numbered among our pleasures.³⁰ In his

²⁸ Ibid., 251.

²⁹ Joseph Tissot, *Du beau, particulièrement en littérature* (Dole: Imprimerie de J.B. Joly, 1831).

³⁰ Francisque Bouillier, *Du plaisir et de la douleur* (Paris: Germer Baillière, 1865). His remarks pertinent to aesthetics occur in Chapter 7.

treatment of this topic he leans heavily on the notion of sympathy, thus indicating Jouffroy's influence on his thinking.

5.3 *Philibert Damiron*

Damiron at least deserves to be mentioned here, though for reasons soon to be made evident I can do no more than mention him. Damiron was a student and ever faithful follower of Cousin, and was Jouffroy's closest friend. He was present when Jouffroy offered his aesthetics course, and was responsible for its publication after Jouffroy's death. He also edited and published the collection of Jouffroy's essays known as the *Nouveaux Mélanges Philosophiques*. In this, Damiron's faithfulness to Cousin proved to be a source of considerable consternation, for when Cousin discovered that Jouffroy had made certain remarks about him which were less than flattering, he prevailed upon Damiron to amend the text. Naturally when word of this reached Cousin's enemies—principally Pierre Leroux—a scandal was born, and Damiron was caught in the middle.³¹

Damiron did apparently put forward something of an aesthetic theory, which occurred at the end of his *Mémoire sur Diderot*.³² The memoir was presented as a series of lectures at the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques and was also published among their *Séances et travaux*. Given Damiron's alliances and allegiances, it is hard to imagine that his theory did not contain strong elements of the Scottish tradition, hence I signal its existence here. However, all printed versions of this work terminate with the following notice: "The memoir concludes with an extended discussion of Diderot's aesthetics, and general appreciation of his philosophy, which lack of space prevents us from printing." Thus, unless the original manuscript one day surfaces, his contributions to the tradition are lost for good. (One wonders, also, just how much of a "general appreciation" of Diderot's philosophy a loyal spiritualist could have managed.)

³¹ Leroux actually published a small book on this issue entitled *De la mutilation d'un écrit posthume de Théodore Jouffroy* (Paris: Imprimerie de Bourgogne et Martinet, 1843).

³² Philibert Damiron, *Mémoire sur Diderot* (Paris: Imprimerie Panckoucke, 1852).

Let us now look at some of the contributions made to the development of the expression theory by individuals who one way or another fell under the influences of Cousin or Jouffroy, but who themselves pursued careers of various sorts outside the academic realm. It is there, as it turns out, that the most significant enhancement of expressionism was to come, and it came not from a philosopher but from a poet.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY

Having myself chosen to pursue an academic career, I confess to finding it a trifle regrettable (though not at all incomprehensible) that the most radical and important innovation to be wrought on the expression theory should come not from anyone within the professional ranks, but from a poet—and one, at that, whose first gainful employment was in the factories of Creusot. This would be René Sully-Prudhomme.

Sully-Prudhomme was not the only individual to come under the influence of the Scottish tradition who found a career elsewhere than in academia; there are four others whose contributions I consider here, including a politician, a literary critic and a priest. Two of these studied under Jouffroy; the rest assimilated the tradition simply through exposure to the writings of its principal representatives.

Since the version of expressionism which Sully-Prudhomme developed stands head and shoulders above the others in importance, due to its clever reinterpretation of the concepts central to the doctrine, it receives by far the greatest share of my attention; and inasmuch as it takes expressionism to a higher plane, so to speak, I examine it last, deferring thereby to an order dictated by "the flow of ideas," rather than by mere chronological considerations. The other figures to be examined here include Alphonse Dumont; the renowned critic Sainte-Beuve; an art critic, historian and politician Louis Vitet; and a priest, the abbé Prosper Gaborit. Of these four "lesser" individuals, two—Sainte-Beuve and Vitet—deserve our attention not so much because of the importance of their contributions to the Scottish tradition, but because they were important figures in their time who had come under the influence of this tradition; the other two—Dumont and Gaborit—did elaborate versions of expressionism which endeavored to respond to various problems inherent in earlier interpretations of the theory.

1. Two More "Clandestine Auditors"

1.1 Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve

Sainte-Beuve was a poet and a critic—a poet early in life and critic later on. It is principally for his criticism, though, that he is known to posterity. His *Causeries du Lundi* and *Nouveaux Lundis*—critical essays which appeared regularly in, first, the *Constitutionnel*, then subsequently the *Moniteur* and *Temps*—constitute twenty-eight volumes of insightful reflections ranging over a remarkable variety of topics, from individuals to works to movements to events. In addition, he produced several volumes of literary portraits, and (perhaps his magnum opus) the immense *Port Royal*, a religious, literary, intellectual history of the seventeenth century in France effected through a "biography" of the convent of Port Royal. A member of the Académie française, he served for some time as librarian in the Mazarine.

Sainte-Beuve was a student of Jouffroy's—one of that select band of auditors who regularly squeezed into Jouffroy's apartment—and he did attend the latter's lectures on aesthetics.¹ As a result of this exposure, elements of Jouffroy's teaching are detectable both in Sainte-Beuve's criticism, and especially in his reflections on critical method. It is also interesting to note that during the time in the mid-1820s when Jouffroy was privately offering his lectures, Sainte-Beuve had become close friends with Victor Hugo, around whom a

¹ T.M. Mustoxidi's *Histoire de l'esthétique française* (Paris: E. Champion, 1920) has served as a valuable resource for the present study, and its utility should not be at all diminished by my setting straight here a matter of record on which Mustoxidi has erred. In speaking of Sainte-Beuve, he remarked "et nous sommes dans l'absolue impossibilité de dire si l'illustre critique avait suivi ou connaissait le *Cours* de Jouffroy" (120). But in fact it is not quite as impossible as all that. Sainte-Beuve avows "je suis de ceux qui assistaient à ces petits Cours intimes, à ces leçons que Jouffroy faisait à quinze ou vingt auditeurs dans sa petite chambre de la rue du Four-Saint-Honoré et qui nous ont laissé une impression si vive." *Causeries des Lundis*, 15 vols. (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1865), VIII, 302. And if this still leaves open the possibility that he missed out on the aesthetics course, there is this: "Dans ses leçons sur le *Beau*, qui par malheur n'ont été nulle part recueillies, M. Jouffroy disait fréquemment d'une voix pénétrée . . ." *Portraits littéraires*, 3 vols. (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1862), II, 311. Happily, as we have seen, these lessons were subsequently collected and published.

literary *cénacle* had formed which included, in addition to Sainte-Beuve, such significant figures as the Deschamps brothers and Alfred de Musset. One might speculate that certain of Jouffroy's aesthetic pronouncements could have found their way to some rather important auditors with Sainte-Beuve acting as intermediary.

As a matter of fact, it is in a work which Sainte-Beuve was preparing when he belonged to this *cénacle* where some very strong intimations of the Scottish expressionist doctrine can be found: his *Vie, poésies et pensées de Joseph Delorme*. Among the *pensées*, a virtual precis of Jouffroy's aesthetic theory (poetically enriched, of course) jumps out at us:

The artistic sentiment implies a lively and intimate feel for things. While the majority of men rest content with surfaces and appearances; while the philosophers, properly so called, recognize a certain something (*je ne sais quoi*) beyond phenomena, whose nature, however, they cannot determine, the artist, as if endowed with a separate sense, quietly goes about feeling, beneath the world of appearances, the other world—wholly interior—of which most are ignorant, and whose existence the philosopher no more than asserts; he is present amidst the invisible play of forces, and sympathizes with them as with (genuine) souls; he received at birth the key to the realm of symbols and the knowledge of forms: what seems incoherent and contradictory to others is for him but a harmonic contrast.²

Sainte-Beuve sees, then, an inner realm whose forces receive expression through natural symbols, thanks to the artist's ability to sympathize with such forces. If there is anything he adds to the basic outlook here it is that he recasts it actively in terms of the productivity of the artist, rather than passively in terms of the receptivity of the spectator. At that time, after all, his own artistic productive side was still dominant.

² C.A. Sainte-Beuve, *Vie, poésies et pensées de Joseph Delorme*, edition, notes and glossary by Gérard Antoine (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1954), Pensée 18, 150. It is interesting to note, also, that two of the poems in this work—one entitled "La soir de la jeunesse," (72-74) the other simply "A M . . .," beginning with the lines "O vous qui, lorsque seul et la tête baissée/ Je suivais mon chemin . . ." (87-88)—are taken to be addressed to Jouffroy.

With respect to Sainte-Beuve's post-1849 critical writings, that aspect of his thinking which remains in line with the tradition under examination here has to do with his search for some kind of *spiritual interior* which an artist expresses through his work, and which a critic must then try to bring to the surface. While apparently no theist in the sense in which Cousin and Jouffroy were, Sainte-Beuve nevertheless finds this notion of a hidden inner self to be indispensable in criticism.

All too often, though, it seems that readers of Sainte-Beuve are taken up with his emphasis on amassing great amounts of information about an author and about the enviroing circumstances of his creation, and tend to see him as something of a deviant positivist ("deviant" because he still believed criticism will always have an element of "art" to it), rather than, as I would suggest, a maverick spiritualist. He did, it must be owned, characterize himself as a "botanist of minds," and suggested, in fact, that "it is to [the study of medicine] that I owe the philosophical spirit, the love of precision."³ But, while it might not sound all that flattering when put this way, his love for—or need for—*imprecision* traces back to Jouffroy.

In a well known piece on Chateaubriand in which Sainte-Beuve discusses critical method, he sounds very much like a nineteenth century positivist in recommending: "It is useful at the outset to begin at the beginning, and wherever possible, to place the superior or distinguished author in his homeland, within his race."⁴ The same is true when he offers a long list of questions that we should ask about any author: "What were his thoughts on religion? How was he affected by the spectacle of nature?—How did he behave where women were concerned? Where money was concerned?—Was he rich? Was he poor—What was his diet, his day to day style of life? etc.—Finally, what was his principal vice or weakness? Every man has one."⁵ And yet in making such inquiries, in posing such questions he does not intend just to spin off a few facile generaliza-

³ Both citations occur in Lander MacClintock, *Sainte-Beuve's Critical Theory and Practice after 1849* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1920), the first, 30; the second, 28.

⁴ C.A. Sainte-Beuve, *Nouveaux Lundis*, 13 vols. (Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1870); III, 18.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

tions and be done: generalizations remain ever a part of the surface of things from which they are drawn. Instead, he believes that such a procedure recommends itself because of the valuable light it sheds on "*la qualité secrète et essentielle des esprits*."⁶

This quality is allowed by Reid, and by his earliest French followers, to remain secret (recall, in the long quote from Sainte-Beuve, above, the quality "whose existence the philosopher no more than asserts"). The spiritualist movement, however, grew increasingly anxious to "know" the secret. And as we observed in treating Lévêque, they not infrequently turned to Leibniz for answers. (Cousin's Leibnizean ventures, remember, dealt more with the absolute than with the peculiar nature of individual substances.)

Sainte-Beuve seems to have remained in touch with the movement, as from time to time he waxes quite Leibnizean. Indeed, the previous quote, in addressing an *essential quality* of this or that mind sounds quite Leibnizean (since Leibniz theorized that each individual substance, or soul, had an essential nature, and from this nature followed the totality of its states). This impression is strengthened when we place the passage in question alongside one in which Sainte-Beuve refers to the poet's "*Miroir à lui . . . sa monade individuelle unique*."⁷ While this Leibnizean turn—which the latter day spiritualists, and with them Sainte-Beuve, took—goes beyond the limits of fruitful inquiry as proposed by Reid, nevertheless it is not in any strict way incompatible with Reid's convictions. And it undeniably constitutes an interesting corollary to an expression theory of art.

1.2 Louis Vitet

Like Sainte-Beuve, Vitet was in attendance at Jouffroy's lectures on aesthetics. He and Jouffroy worked together for some time on the *Globe*, and maintained a cordial relationship with one another until Jouffroy's untimely death. As Sainte-Beuve recounts,

It was [Jouffroy] to whom M. Vitet was most closely attached in the movement which more than twenty years ago drew the young men of the time . . . down the paths of studious innovation and discovery. In this initial dividing up of roles among friends, according to their

⁶ Ibid., 18.

⁷ Ibid., VIII, 93. The word "*monade*" is in fact emphasized in his text.

vocations and aptitudes, M. Vitet took on as his mission to apply to the arts the principles of this psychology which had at last, so they believed, been elevated to its proper rank.⁸

Vitet was an active political figure throughout his life, serving in the Chamber of Deputies until the monarchy came to an end in 1848, then subsequently in the Legislative Assembly. Due to his keen interest in the arts, and especially in architecture, he was appointed to the position of Inspector of Historical Monuments; in fact the very position was created by Guizot with him in mind. Thus of all the individuals considered here he was able more than anyone else not to just talk about beauty, but actually to *do* something on its behalf.

Although the influence of Jouffroy on Vitet's aesthetic outlook can be reasonably inferred, his critical writings tend to be more concrete than theoretical; consequently it is difficult to put one's finger on precise passages which give evidence of this influence. He wrote, for example, on such topics as Christian mosaics in Rome, Byzantine architecture in France, antiquities in the city of Orange, and did numerous pieces on music, ranging in scope from the history of harmony in the Middle Ages, to theatrical music in France, to the implication which Rossini's compositions held for the very future of music.⁹ His works reveal a deep respect for artistic traditions, and a desire to see artists remain oriented to such traditions. Even artistic originality itself, he believed, could only emerge from and be measured against particular traditional practices.¹⁰ In part, undoubtedly, because of this reverence for tradition, in part for his political activity, and in part because of the circle of associates within which he moved, Vitet was sometimes referred to as "the Royer-Collard of the arts." For these reasons, therefore, even though he provided no theoretical texts that we might analyze, he seems to merit mention in a study such as this.

⁸ *Portraits littéraires*, Vol. III, 418.

⁹ These essays, along with numerous others, are collected in a four-volume edition entitled *Etudes sur l'histoire de l'art* (Paris: Michel Lévy frères, 1864).

¹⁰ These points, and many other more concrete ones, are developed in his essay "De l'enseignement des arts du dessin en France," *Revue des Deux Mondes* (1 Nov. 1864), 74-107.

2. Alphonse Dumont

Dumont published his *Etude sur l'esthétique* in 1876.¹¹ It contains a concise restatement of the expressionist doctrine, but is sprinkled, in addition, with a number of refinements and adjustments in certain areas that had proven problematic. Since the basic configuration of the doctrine should by now be familiar to us, let us turn straightaway to a consideration of the refinements that Dumont recommends. Of these I will examine three: the beauty of the Divinity, beauty and morality, and the nature and "purpose" of the ugly.

1. *The Divinity*. Consistently throughout the Scottish tradition we find the term beauty being applied not just to the object which constitutes the external sign of some spiritual perfection, but also to that very spiritual perfection itself. And needless to say, where the beauty of nature is concerned, the spiritual perfection in question is Spiritual Perfection—God. Indeed from Reid through Lévêque the material manifestation was said to receive the attribution "beautiful" *indirectly* or metaphorically, while the unperceived source was the proper (direct, literal) recipient of this attribution. Dumont, however, strongly emphasizes that anything which is properly to be termed beautiful must have some perceptible content to it. In his own words, "force only becomes beautiful when it is expressed through certain qualities which enable us to know it" (EE, 5). So, for example, "you see a beautiful forest. . . . This forest has something of the divine about it; in this fashion alone is God incarnate in the world" (EE, 42). God remains, in his eyes, the *principle* of beauty, inasmuch as he constitutes the principle of order and power; and yet principles, in and of themselves, are not to be termed beautiful, thus "it is impossible to say that God is beautiful without falling into anthropomorphism" (EE, 42).

Given, then, that the invisible element is essentially dependent on the material for its expression, and must ever decline on its own behalf any attributions of beauty, still, Dumont holds, the more it comes to dominate the material element—the more, that is, that this latter element carries our thought beyond itself and induces us to

¹¹ Alphonse Dumont, *Etude sur l'esthétique* (Paris: Typographie Coutry et Puyforcat, 1876). Succeeding references to this work will be incorporated into the text, referring to the work as EE, followed by the page number.

contemplate its spiritual interior—the greater, proportionately, will be the beauty. And he bases his hierarchy of the effectiveness of the several art forms on this principle. Thus we ascend from the most materially grounded of the arts, architecture, through painting to music and ultimately to poetry, the least material of them all.

2. *Morality.* Just as Dumont argues that the principle of natural beauty is not itself beautiful, so too does he claim that the principles of moral beauty cannot be thought of as beautiful. Not only is the moral law itself removed from the sphere of beauty, however; the desire which any of us might possess to adhere to it is similarly removed from this sphere. True moral beauty, on Dumont's account, "consists in the order and grandeur of our will" (EE, 40), through the efforts we make to do right. And these efforts will be capable of being known through observation.

It bears remarking that Dumont actually argues for a greater separation between beauty and morality than any of his spiritualist predecessors—a point, as we shall soon see, carried further by Sully-Prudhomme. He speaks, after all, of moral beauty, whereas Reid and Cousin unambiguously regarded true beauty as being ultimately moral in character (Jouffroy and Lévêque were a bit more ambiguous on this point). Dumont suggests that many beautiful things convey to him no idea of the good, while many a good thing—the life of a peasant cultivating his fields, for example—might be not at all beautiful (EE, 29). Yet since we do call certain actions beautiful, we cannot entirely dissociate moral goodness from the aesthetic realm. In effect, then, what Dumont recommends is that morality be demoted from the status of a sufficient condition for the manifestation of beauty to that of a necessary one: human actions which we deem beautiful, that is, must in no way contravene the moral law (EE, 30).

3. *The Ugly.* Dumont also has certain refinements to offer on the question of ugliness in nature—a problem, as we have seen, for anyone endorsing a spiritualistic, or, more generally, a theistic interpretation of expressionism. Dumont's treatment of this problem seems to have been developed with Lévêque in mind. Although it is true that Lévêque seemed to leave us with two different accounts of ugliness, one of these two—and probably the one he would have offered as his principal position—held that the ugly resulted when the *force vitale* asserted itself in a disorderly fashion, when it fell out of

accord with the natural law which specified how an individual member of a certain species ought to develop.

Dumont wonders, quite reasonably, if nature is the handiwork of God, how can its laws ever be contravened by the very spirit which animates it? To attribute a critical defect to the workings of nature is nothing short of finding God to be an incompetent workman. An aesthetic theodicy is in order here. A safer and sounder alternative, he believes, is to lay blame not upon nature for producing ugliness, but upon ourselves, upon our own sensibility, for "that which appears to us to be disorderly is really only an effect of some law with which we are not acquainted. As for genuine disorder, it only exists in our mind" (EE, 33). The ugliest of creatures falls within the laws which order its being. When we fail to find a place in the system of things for such a creature we deem it ugly; but if we could just glimpse the rationale behind the order of nature, we would see beauty in all manner of things.

Clearly, this resolution of "the problem of the ugly" smacks strongly of Leibniz's resolution of the problem of evil. To strengthen the parallel, we find Dumont even speaking in a very Leibnizean manner of the positive purpose served by the ugly: "just as shadows are needed to accentuate the gleam of light, so too is ugliness required to make beauty stand forth" (EE, 34).

All the points we have examined in this consideration of Dumont's *Etude* derive in one way or another from the basic relationship between the interior and the exterior of things which is central to expressionism—in one case this interior is God, in another it is the human soul. And it is evident from this examination that Dumont is still of the conviction that whatever problems arise with respect to this alleged relationship, it remains just the same a presumption worth making. We draw closer to the annulation of that presumption, but there is still one important figure to be considered before we actually arrive there.

3. *L'abbé Prosper Gaborit*

Though a teacher much of his life, Gaborit nevertheless deserves to be treated separately from the other academics. While these latter all taught philosophy in the French educational system, Gaborit taught design and architecture at a small seminary in Nantes. It is thus most

surprising to find the Scottish aesthetic tradition being carried forth by him. Cousin's academic career, after all, rose and fell and rose and fell again in inverse relation to the extent to which the church managed to exert its influence in French educational life. Jouffroy too, as we have seen, was widely viewed as something of a heretic. That a cleric, therefore, should ground his own aesthetic theory upon ideas put forward by these thinkers illustrates the extent to which the Church had realigned itself intellectually, during the half century which followed Cousin's meteoric ascendancy. The implication seems to be that the positivistic and materialistic elements in France had strengthened their positions to such an extent that spiritualism came to be viewed as a not entirely unpalatable alternative, one which could be interpreted as being supportive of church doctrine. This of course was something which the spiritualists had all along claimed, although in earlier years, their protestations to this effect had fallen on deaf ears.

It is interesting to note, also, that in strictly chronological terms (not, that is, in terms of doctrinary advancement) it is Gaborit who carried the tradition furthest "forward," as his shorter treatise on this subject, *La Connaissance du beau*,¹² appeared in 1899, while his major work, *Le Beau dans la nature et dans les arts* (in two volumes, with the second volume being devoted exclusively to expression in the arts), first published in 1871, was reissued as late as 1913.¹³

Gaborit found in Reid's aesthetics "precious elements of truth," and "many highly interesting analyses and observations" (BN; I, 224). Those features which we find him lauding are the very elements which constitute the foundation work of his own theory: that the source of beauty is internal; that a beautiful exterior is a reflection of its beautiful interior; that there are natural signs through which the interior expresses itself; that all nature, not just human

¹² Prosper Gaborit, *La Connaissance du beau* (Paris: Bloud et Barral, 1899). This is a much smaller work than *Le Beau* . . . , almost a pamphlet, but it follows the larger work theme by theme, step by step.

¹³ L'abbé Prosper Gaborit, *Le Beau dans la nature et dans les arts*, 2 vols. (Paris: Berche & Tralin, 1885); and (Lyon: E. Vitta, 1913). Subsequent references to this work will be integrated into the text, referring to the book as BN, followed by the volume number in Roman numerals, then the page number.

nature, is fitted to exhibit such signs. Jouffroy too, for having vastly expanded and enriched Reid's analyses, receives high praise from Gaborit, who concluded that Jouffroy "advanced greatly the study of aesthetics" (BN; I, 229). Indeed, in elaborating the basic tenets of expressionism it is Jouffroy whom Gaborit is most likely to cite (followed in this respect by Cousin). And yet both Reid and Jouffroy are judged by him to have their shortcomings—in fact on close examination it turns out to be the same shortcoming formulated in two different ways. Reid, he claims, "did not reach the level of principles; the rational element was lacking in him" (BN; I, 224), while Jouffroy is faulted not so much for having grounded his theory in human sensibility, as for never really managing to rise above this level of inquiry. In both cases, clearly, it is their unwillingness to dabble in metaphysics which prompts Gaborit's criticism. This impulse is one which we first detected in Cousin, but Gaborit is quite explicit in signaling Charles Lévêque as his true source of inspiration, for the manner in which he integrated the concept of the ideal into the expressionist framework.

Gaborit accepts wholeheartedly the notion that there are special ideals, and that each and every species of plant, animal, even mineral is seen, appraised and appreciated by us in relation to its ideal type. The mere existence of comparative judgments, which we readily make in all manner of situations, is taken by Gaborit as an indication of the existence of such ideals: "When we say that this lily is more beautiful than that one, that this oak is more beautiful than that one, it is necessary that we have in mind some ground of comparison, and just what can it be other than the idea, more or less complete, more or less perfect, of this flower or this tree" (BN; I, 80). And "this type of each species is the ideal, that which Plotinus grandly termed 'the flower of being'" (BN; I, 80). As we develop a certain familiarity with a number of exemplars of any given species, its ideal type will begin to come clear to us, though it may never, in truth, become completely clear, and it will undoubtedly be clearer to some than to others.

Gaborit's acceptance of Lévêque's notion of the ideal element in beauty, while enthusiastic, is not absolute. Wary of some of the problems which Lévêque encountered in dealing with both natural and human beauty, Gaborit insinuates a qualification here and there

in an effort to preserve the principal thrust of the theory, while protecting it against the criticism to which it was vulnerable.

One such qualification involves his subdivision of beauty into three categories: the graceful (*gracieux*), the beautiful (properly speaking) and the sublime. The graceful is applied to any being which develops as fully as possible according to its own nature (*selon la loi*). This development is understood to be spontaneous and unreflective; thus it stands in sharp contrast to the kind of activity which is associated with beauty in its proper sense—free, intelligent activity—*human* activity. The sublime, within this scheme, involves nature taken as a whole, surpassing human powers of comprehension (BN; I, 69-70). Clearly, beauty is being used in two distinct senses here, and Gaborit is certainly aware of this. In one sense it is functioning, let us say, generically, as the fundamental term of aesthetic praise, while in the other a more limited signification is applied to it. He does not assert that this distinction is reflected in ordinary language; our language is quite indistinct and inconclusive in this area (BN, I, 81). His precisions regarding these terms, therefore, have their significance only within his system (though what theorist doesn't hope that his system would one day work its way into everyday usage?).

To see how Gaborit aims to buttress the idealized version of expressionism, let us look first at the question of human beauty. It will be recalled that with Lévêque, commitment to the notion of an ideal human form ran afoul of the conviction that a beautiful human being was one whose exterior expressed a morally virtuous interior (the Socrates-Alexander problem). And let us not forget, either, that the latter thesis was, of the two, the one which was more deeply ingrained in the Scottish and the spiritualist aesthetic tradition.

Now while it seemed that, on Lévêque's approach, we were being pulled in two different directions—wanting, for one set of reasons, to see Socrates as being beautiful, yet inclining, from other promptings, to reserve that description for Alexander—this would not be the case on Gaborit's account of the matter. For Gaborit, those aspects of Alexander's countenance which please us do so because they come close (closer than Socrates does) to embodying the ideal of human physical development *selon la loi*; which is to say that Alexander, properly speaking, merits from us only the description *gracieux*. Socrates, on the other hand, merits the description

"beautiful," for in his face we can read moral turmoil and moral resolve: "if Socrates' physiognomy expressed certain base tendencies, such shameful tendencies did truly exist in him, and he owned that he had to struggle valiantly against them in order ultimately to triumph" (BN; I, 101).

What we find here, then, is a strong reaffirmation of the link between moral virtue and beauty. Gaborit puts very little stock in the idea (dear to Lévêque) that some faces are better suited than others to expressing their interior. Nevertheless, he argues strongly, and at length, that there does exist a close correspondence between the "look" one's face projects and that individual's moral character—a correspondence which he takes, as did Reid a century before, to have been established by God.

It is in this fashion that the general who exhorts his soldiers before battle, the orator who speaks heatedly of the cause he supports, the politician who faces the tempestuous mob in order to quiet a revolutionary outburst, any man who places himself in peril to accomplish an action he deems noble shines with an exceptional beauty, for his aspect is illuminated with all the generosity of his sentiments. (BN; I, 98)

Perhaps Gaborit does overstate his position when he claims that "a person's carriage, voice and gestures *never* contradict one another,"¹⁴ for more often than not he argues for a strong, but not an absolute correspondence between inner and outer. And more than once he reminds us that people who judge of this correspondence come equipped with varying degrees of sensitivity and insight.¹⁵ Some of us, that is to say, are better suited than others to make such judgments—an obvious truth loaded with obvious pitfalls of its own.

The tripartite division of beauty (taken generically) leads us quickly to the realization that for Gaborit, nature is never *properly* termed beautiful. Natural creatures can only be *gracieux*, and it is only our linguistic imprecision that leads us to speak of any of them as beautiful. There is a caveat to this, however, and that is that we at times—many times, in fact—are prone to attribute certain moral qualities to members of the animal kingdom, and even of the

¹⁴ Gaborit, *La Connaissance*, 21.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 41, 52.

vegetable kingdom. We see the horse, plunging into battle with his rider, as being brave, the mouse as timid, the pig as stupid; we even see the oak as resolute, the orchid as ostentatious. And to the extent that we see moral qualities embodied in the works of nature, we are prompted to call certain things beautiful (or ugly). The question is, of course, to what extent are we justified in making such attributions? Gaborit believes that certain animals, the horse, say, do manifest some degree of intelligence, and they likewise possess certain conative capacities. But reason, apperception and will are nowhere to be found in such animals, and so we can do no more than attribute such powers to them. Whatever intelligence they exhibit, that is, "derives from the laws governing their organization; all credit thus rightly belongs to God."¹⁶ In introducing this notion of attribution, as Gaborit does, I confess I do not find it clear as to whether he is offering a justification for our tendency to call natural things beautiful, or merely an explanation of this tendency; indications along the way point in both directions. In any case, he at least sets us to thinking about our inclination to attribute human qualities to nature—our inclination toward anthropomorphism. It is Sully-Prudhomme who will take an unambiguous stand on this issue.

Likewise, we are left wondering why it is that slugs and bacteria are not even found by us to be graceful, since they too develop "*selon la loi*," and they too reflect the divine order every bit as adequately as a horse or a gazelle does. Gaborit does not avail himself of the "neat" resolution of this problem to which Dumont appealed. As a result, we are still left with serious questions about the mechanics of natural signification—questions which also await Sully-Prudhomme's response.

Another aspect of Gaborit's thinking which deserves to be underscored is his moralistic approach to the beautiful. Surely this is present in certain of his predecessors—Cousin in particular—but it is developed much more fully and emphatically by Gaborit. "Love of beauty," he holds, "can only be salutary," "beauty lights up our intelligence . . ." and "leads us to love the good."¹⁷ And good art—from which (again following Cousin) he heartwarmingly excludes moralistic, "preachy" art—is "a great power, and can

¹⁶ Ibid., 24.

¹⁷ Ibid., 64-67.

contribute in large to strengthening our moral sense and leading us to admire what is truly worthy of our love and esteem" (BN; II, 49).

Finally, it is heartwarming to find Gaborit making appeal, in his treatment of the arts, to recent developments in that realm. Unlike Cousin and Lévêque, who were rooted, respectively, in seventeenth-century France and ancient Greece, Gaborit countenances works by writers such as Victor Hugo and George Sand, a painter such as Goya whose sketches of a fantastic nature had only recently (in 1878) been exhibited in Paris, and the composer Félicien David whose proto-impressionist works, largely forgotten now, were creating quite a stir in mid-nineteenth-century France. Thus in spite of the fact that the general thrust of Gaborit's aesthetics is somewhat reactionary in its reaffirmation of the basic tenets of expressionism, he at least brings these tenets to bear on contemporary artistic trends.

4. René F.-A. Sully-Prudhomme

Sully-Prudhomme is better known to posterity as a poet than as a philosopher. He was, in fact, the first recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature, an award conferred on him in 1901. It was in 1865 that his first volume of poetry, *Stances et poèmes*, was published, followed the next year by *les Épreuves*, and later by *les Destins* and *la Justice*. His poetic output diminished in his later years, but his overall literary output did not, as he turned to works of a more analytic, almost scientific nature, of which *L'Expression dans les beaux-arts* is a capital example.¹⁸ Undoubtedly his early education at the Ecole Polytechnique served as both stimulus and ground for this tendency.

Sully-Prudhomme studied with neither Cousin nor Jouffroy (he would have been three years old when Jouffroy died; nine when Cousin retired), and yet the parallels between his aesthetic theory, developed in *L'Expression dans les beaux-arts*, and theirs—particularly Jouffroy's—is too striking to be written off as mere coincidence. Not all disciples, after all, are molded in the classroom. As

¹⁸ René F.A. Sully-Prudhomme, *L'Expression dans les beaux-arts* (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1883). Subsequent references to this work will be integrated into the text, referring to the book as EB, followed by the page number.

we shall soon see, however, Sully-Prudhomme was no mere perpetuator of the expressionist doctrine, but was probably the most profound innovator within that tradition that the nineteenth century was to witness. And as a member of an important literary society known as the *Cénacle parnassien*, which included among its members Leconte de Lisle, Henry Houssaye, Paul Verlaine, and Anatole France, the influence of his thinking likely found its way to many significant minds of the time not just through the published word, but through the spoken word.

My examination of Sully-Prudhomme's aesthetics proceeds in the following fashion. First, I consider the manner in which he "de-spiritualizes" expressionism; secondly, I sketch his theory of perception from which the expression theory emerges, indicating those elements of it which show a strikingly Reidean character, while pointing out, as well, its points of diversion; thirdly, I provide a close look at the manner in which expression is effected in this new version of the theory; fourthly, I describe the ways in which art, beauty, and expression interrelate with one another. I conclude with some observations on the progress of Scottish expressionism up to Sully-Prudhomme, and on the future which lay in store for it.

4.1 "*Interiors*" and "*Exteriors*"

Conformant with all the representatives of the expressionist doctrine we have considered, Sully-Prudhomme continues to speak of the things in this world as presenting a sensible exterior and possessing an unperceivable interior. Verbal designations for these two features of reality have of course varied—Jouffroy, for example, spoke of *l'invisible*—but Sully-Prudhomme opts for "*intérieur*" or "*fond*," reasoning that we can apprehend the exterior of an object through any of our senses, not just our sense of sight, and therefore a visible-invisible distinction might be misleadingly restrictive (EB, 55, 190).¹⁹

Sully-Prudhomme's use of the term "interior," however, does not imply a compliance on his part with the metaphysical outlook that traditionally accompanied such terminology: the idea that, in the

¹⁹ Note that he does not refer to Jouffroy by name in either place; but then the only "philosopher" he *does* refer to by name is Darwin. A few artists are mentioned, but on the whole, the work reads more like a scientific tract than a scholarly one.

case of man, there was some kind of substantial soul or life force in some (mysterious) way inhabiting and animating the person, and in the case of nature that God constituted the efficient cause of all natural activity. He is willing to grant that human consciousness requires some unifying element in order for it to be consciousness at all, but whatever this element ("*milieu interne*") might be "is unknown to us in its nature, [and] belongs to the domain of metaphysics" (EB, 78). Sully-Prudhomme, however, was no metaphysician, and so he insists that his use of terms such as "the field of consciousness" (*le champ de conscience*) be understood to harbor no metaphysical commitments on his part. Still, he is promulgating an expression theory of art, and he does exhibit his willingness to adhere to an interior-exterior distinction. How, in light of his metaphysical reticence, does he manage this?

Sully-Prudhomme observes that we do distinguish in the language, quite systematically, between these two classes of phenomena—the mental or spiritual and the material. And while significant inroads might have been made by the materialists and the physiologists regarding the explanation of human behavior in non-spiritualistic terms, there nevertheless exists no vocabulary which effectively "materializes" mind and its activities. And so regardless of who ultimately wins out—the materialists or the spiritualists (if any final victory is even possible here)—speaking in terms of some exterior-interior relationship cannot only be *understood* by anyone regardless of philosophical commitments, it is in fact the only effective means at hand for dealing with a huge class of highly significant phenomena. In his own words:

When we thus speak of soul and body, of the faculties of the soul, of mind and matter, it is to avoid an offensive neologism, . . . and we mean only to distinguish within the human domain between two empirically distinct classes of phenomena, one of which, generally referred to as "physical," affects the senses of the observer and can be directly observed by him manifested on the exterior of certain kindred beings, the other of which, called in general "moral" (*moraux*), is only directly observable in himself. We leave completely in reserve the question of what the substratum of these two classes of phenomena consists in, how these substances differ if they really are distinct, or if there really are substances involved at all. (EB, 181).

Clearly, whatever Sully-Prudhomme says about mind and matter with respect to the domain of human consciousness is equally applicable to the natural realm and its (alleged) relation to Absolute Mind or God, indeed it applies even more strongly there since there is no equivalent in nature to the type of awareness we can achieve of our own consciousness through introspection. In short, then, Sully-Prudhomme's resolve to retain the interior-exterior distinction regarding both human and natural phenomena is, by his own estimate, a linguistic expedient and nothing more. And in fact even now, a century later, despite great advances in materialist explanations in both natural science and psychology, retention of this distinction within the language is still easily noticeable and highly convenient.

4.2 *Perception*

Sully-Prudhomme is more diligent than any of his French predecessors in developing a theory of perception and integrating it into his aesthetics. (Garnier does develop a theory of perception, but it would be better in his case to say that his aesthetics is integrated into, hence subsidiary to, this theory.) His theory exhibits a number of traits in common with Reid's—enough so that it is worth making a distinct enumeration of them.

1. Sully-Prudhomme's approach is realistic, not idealistic; it is entirely proper, he contends, to speak of directly perceiving external reality. At the same time, he allows that only one sense—that of touch—provides *immediate* acquaintance with the object perceived;²⁰ the other senses are only reached by vibrations, waves or effluent particles. Still, if just one sense can be said to place us in immediate contact with reality, that is sufficient to justify the conclusion that we directly perceive this reality. The idealist, after all, would claim that even our sense of touch provided us only with ideas, and would then be left with that unbridgeable gulf between ideas and things to bridge. It is also noteworthy that Reid placed considerable emphasis on the information which our sense of touch can communicate about the world around us.

²⁰ One is reminded in this that Reid too placed special emphasis on the sense of touch, especially in the discerning of primary qualities (see point 3, below).

2. Sully-Prudhomme thus recognizes an objective component to our experience, and he notes that there is a distinctly subjective component, as well. Although he does not use the typical philosophical terminology in this regard, these two aspects of our experience provide us, on his analysis, with what amounts to the distinction between primary and secondary qualities. This is a distinction which both realists and idealists have drawn, but since Sully-Prudhomme draws it along realist lines, he again places himself alongside Reid. While our sense of touch, for example, places us in contact with an object through the resistance which the object exerts on our fingertips, we are capable of coming to an understanding of the shape of the object by the succession of tactile impressions we receive as we pass our hand across the object's surface. These in turn are corroborated by the visual impressions it likewise provides. Such qualities as shape and solidity are primary; secondary qualities such as color, taste, odor and the like will reach us by means of waves or effluvia and will not have their objectivity corroborated by any corresponding tactile impressions.²¹

3. It will be recalled that Reid, in discussing secondary qualities, noted that ordinary language exhibits a tendency to confuse the sensation with the quality,²² a confusion which philosophical analysis should well seek to avoid. Sully-Prudhomme remarks the same tendency, though in his vocabulary it is a confusion of the subjective with the objective which he warns against: "Extreme prudence is required . . . to avoid attributing to external objects anything other than what truly belongs to their nature. The slightest imprudence in this manner of attribution leads to anthropomorphism, and any analogies are thereby stripped of their scientific authority" (EB, 33). But while such anthropomorphism is inappropriate in natural science, it is absolutely essential, as we shall soon see, to our aesthetic apprehension of the world, as it provides the ground for what he terms subjective expression.

4. For Reid, it will be recalled, there were various elements of our experience of the world which were supplied by the mind, not

²¹ Reid likewise developed his "geometry of visibles" to account, in part, for the (real) correlation—and to explain away the (apparent) discrepancies—between the information supplied by vision and that supplied by touch.

²² See above, Chap. 1, Sect. 1.2, Subsect. 5.

by the world itself. These elements, when articulated, constituted the first principles of commonsense. They were judged by him to be spontaneously activated by our sensory confrontation with reality, the nativistic input without which experience itself would not be possible. Sully-Prudhomme alludes in several places to such spontaneous propensities on our part, although on his interpretation they do not seem to enjoy the ultimate status that they do with Reid. Rather, they are always presented with a qualification, a hesitancy, as if to suggest that though we naturally incline to interpret reality in a certain way, we could at least form some intelligible notion of reality even if these principles were presumed false. For Reid, of course, presumption of the falsity of any first principle would lead straightaway (or eventually) to absurdity.

Sully-Prudhomme asserts, for example, "we have admitted just now *as an irreducible postulate of human consciousness* the real distinction between the external world and the world of our sensations" (EB, 65),²³ but this is followed immediately by the qualification that we do so "because aesthetics depends on such a condition, true or false; if it is only an illusion, it is an illusion necessary to aesthetics, and that is sufficient for us to respect it." An irreducible postulate of human consciousness seems to deserve a bit more respect than this. He speaks of the "faith which we have in the objectivity of our perceptions" (EB, 72), and of how we "spontaneously exteriorize our visual perceptions and . . . identify them with their objects" (EB, 72), but then he again suggests that this may be an illusion. Sympathy, a key element in Sully-Prudhomme's expression theory, occurs, he asserts, when "we *spontaneously* compare to ourselves the person(ality) expressed" (EB, 98),²⁴ but, he goes on to suggest, "this accidental transmission of ourselves is involuntary; it is a surprise exercised on ourselves by others, which we can [subsequently] consent to or refuse" (EB, 99). He even detects in language itself "a spontaneous analysis of elements common to our moral states and to the sensations which compose the perceptions which reveal the external world to us" (EB, 81), a central thesis in his expression theory; but this turns out to involve anthropomorphism, and while "anthropomorphism introduces itself

²³ Emphasis mine.

²⁴ Emphasis mine.

spontaneously into our manner of contemplating nature" (EB, 102), it is nevertheless the phenomenon "which engenders all metaphysical errors, all religious errors, and the most charming poetic fictions" (EB, 102). Therefore, while Sully-Prudhomme, like Reid, grounds his aesthetics in various natural dispositions of mind, unlike Reid he invariably seasons these dispositions with a dash of skepticism.

In the end, in fact, Sully-Prudhomme asserts the basic unit of experience to be the *representation*: the mind forms a representation of reality which contains both objective and subjective components. This suggests a certain Kantianism, although as we have seen, the objective component within experience for Sully-Prudhomme is *too* objective—too directly revelatory of external reality—for his theory to be genuinely Kantian. Unfortunately, Kantianism and common-sense realism make for an unhealthy mixture. Though they share certain features in common—the a priori element in experience, for example—they come apart on the question of man's relation to external reality. Fortunately, Sully-Prudhomme's theory of aesthetic expression can still be appreciated in spite of this weakness, if only we tiptoe with extreme caution through his philosophical terminology.

Keeping in mind, then, the various traits which have been enumerated above, we are now in a position to provide a brief sketch of Sully-Prudhomme's theory of perception, and to indicate the importance of this theory to his aesthetic analysis. We receive sensations from the external world either immediately (through touch) or mediately (through any of our other senses which are affected by waves or particles). Sensation as thus construed is an act of communication in some sense—nature communicating something of itself to ourselves—and communication can be effected only where there is some common ground shared by both communicants. In the case of perception, that common ground is to be found, for example, in the interplay between the force we exert on an object by pressing against it, and the force it exerts back upon us in resisting our pressure. The result of this interplay is the sensation of resistance which any solid body provides us. Or again, we find in our representation of a certain scene five objects which we call trees, and we naturally and spontaneously believe that there correspond to these elements within our representation five trees in the real world itself (though if need be we could take the trouble to confirm this belief through immediate, tactile means). At the very least, our perceptions

convey the belief that “something exists out there,” and mere existence would then constitute the trait shared by the object and ourselves.

In truth, the variety of qualities shared by objects and perceivers, according to Sully-Prudhomme, is far greater than what is required in order for simple perception to occur. It is here where the utmost precision is required in demarcating between types of shared qualities, for certain of them communicate to us something of an object’s true nature while others are responsible for its *expressive* character. Let us now explore what is involved in this distinction.

4.3 *Expression*

Up to this point we have noted only one amendment proposed by Sully-Prudhomme to the traditional expressionist doctrine, though it is a monumental one: the de-spiritualization of the very notion of expression itself, leading to the reinterpretation of the concepts of the (expressed) interior and the (perceived) exterior. A change of this magnitude, however, has to produce reverberations throughout the entire system. If expression can no longer be treated as the revelation of a genuine spiritual interior by means of natural signs, how *does* it work, and what becomes of these natural signs?

1. *Signs*. Taking the latter question first, Sully-Prudhomme denies that expression is accomplished through the medium of signs at all; signs must signify, and on his view it is problematic, hence beyond the bounds of adequate theorization, as to whether there is anything *to* signify (whether, that is, there is any spiritual interior to man or nature). Some signs, such as those which compose most languages, are purely conventional—even Reid and the others denied that these signs were expressive. Other signs, according to Sully-Prudhomme, can be termed natural, but his understanding of this term is quite different from that of his predecessors. True, the same set of signs might be at issue—shaking the head from side to side, for example, to indicate negation or refusal—but he prefers to offer a naturalistic even Darwinian account of how such signs came to be used, rather than treat them as characters in the Language of Nature (EB, 74-75). Seen in this fashion, they too have an arbitrariness about them which, even from the traditional expressionist point of view, would render them incapable of being truly expressive.

2. *Instead of Signs.* What is necessary for genuine expression to occur, Sully-Prudhomme contends, is that there be some *identity of character* between the vehicle and the object of expression (EB, 76). On his account, the vehicle of expression is the sensible component in perception (the *état sensible*), which puts us in touch with external reality. (Here is one point where his not-quite-Kantian theory of the representational aspect of perception causes a bit of confusion, for repeatedly the examples he gives look not like subjective states, but rather like real things—melodies, faces, trees, etc. Let us keep this in mind in weighing his analysis.) The object of expression is a certain affective state (*état moral*) existing in the consciousness of the perceiver and attributed to the expressive object. A weeping willow droops limply, its branches are tossed about at the whim of the wind; this generally languid character is shared by an individual who finds himself gripped by sadness. The tree strikes us as expressive of this affective state because we feel there is a genuine congruity between the two phenomena. The same parallel can be detected between a melody we might term sprightly, and our own behavior when we find ourselves in a sprightly mood.

Sully-Prudhomme devotes an entire chapter to tracing out the rich variety of semantic transfers between the realm of sensible perception and that of our *états moraux*, the latter consisting of intellect, will, and sentiment (*coeur*), which can be found in language—"an unimpeachable witness for humanity" (EB, 80). A term (literally) of physical extension, such as "high" is shown by him to have worked its way into the domain of taste (sensible perception) in the expression "*haut goût*," in the realm of temperature—"high temperature"—and also to have uses in describing affective states: "high esteem," "*hauteur*" (pride), etc.²⁵ A term implying movement, such as "*léger*"—light, nimble—has uses in describing sensations—an "*odeur légère*," a "*voix légère*"—and also in characterizing certain *états moraux*: "*légèreté de caractère, de l'esprit*," and so on. Let us keep in mind here that such linguistic evidence as this is bearing witness only to a profound and thoroughgoing tendency on our part to *view* reality and human consciousness

²⁵ This and the following example are drawn from an immense chart which Sully-Prudhomme draws up in illustration of precisely these kinds of relationships. The chart unfolds between 80-81.

as standing in a certain relation to one another. It is not intended to suggest that such a relation can be thought of (in Leibnizean terminology) as "well founded." Such a conclusion could only be reached by "glimpsing the interior of nature"—a purely speculative task which Sully-Prudhomme leaves to the metaphysicians.

3. *Subjective and Objective Expression.* Within the general category of expression, Sully-Prudhomme detects two different types which he labels, respectively, "objective" and "subjective." Objective expression involves the manifestation of the interior states of another person through the means described in the previous section. Since we are aware of our own consciousness through introspection, we feel it wholly legitimate to attribute a similar consciousness, a similar interior, to beings who look and act similar to ourselves. In fact, whenever we are justified in inferring to the *real existence* of a consciousness such as our own, based on the congruity we *know* exists between our own sensation and affection, the expression in question can rightly be deemed objective. It just so happens, however, that it is only other human beings whose behavior ever really justifies such an influence: however "human" a dog might on occasion behave, it would still be hazardous to infer that its behavior stemmed from anything vaguely similar to the consciousness we ourselves possess.

The expression attributed to the dog, then, and with it to the rest of nature, is what Sully-Prudhomme terms subjective expression. The difference between these two types of expression does not reveal itself in our initial impulse to interpret a certain sensation as expressive: whether we have just laid eyes on a man, a horse, or a tree, we will spontaneously attribute a certain expressive attitude to each. In the case of the latter two, however, our attribution, on further analysis, reflection and observation, will show itself to have been groundless; no consciousness akin to our own (whatever that might involve) can reasonably be thought to inhabit the interior of the horse or the tree. What was at work when we attributed expressiveness to these non-human beings was our natural and spontaneous tendency toward anthropomorphism.

An individual moved by the form [of an object], has at the outset, prior to any examination, no reason to refuse it an interior which corresponds and bears analogy to his own, for it produces on him the same sympathetic effects that it would if it really expressed one; he spontane-

ously supplies what is lacking in the phenomenon and places an interior beneath the form. Such is the principle of anthropomorphism, to which all mankind are naturally inclined to force nature to submit. It is the principal source of poetry. One should not be surprised, then, that poetry is repellent to science; the latter begins where the former leaves off. (EB, 121)

Again let us be careful to note that even objective expression does not, on Sully-Prudhomme's account, justify any belief in a soul or any other form of spiritual substance. We humans might all be mere machines, but we are at least similar to one another in many decisive respects, and if it is expedient to group certain of these respects under the general heading "interior states" or even "spiritual states" then it would be pointless to deny ourselves this expediency. We are anthropomorphic in our interpretations of nature at large, but it is hardly proper to say that we are anthropomorphic in interpreting the behavior of *other humans*. Herein lies the ground of Sully-Prudhomme's distinction.

4. *Sympathy*. There remains one more essential component of expression and that is the notion of sympathy. The reader might have noticed that there is a potentially grave problem lurking in an analysis which bases expressionism on the identity of character existing between two relata. Identity, after all, is a symmetrical relationship; and so if it is proper to say that a tree is expressive of a certain feeling state, it would seem equally possible to say that a certain feeling state was expressive of the tree. An absurdity of this magnitude would surely render Sully-Prudhomme's theory unacceptable. His appeal to the concept of sympathy, however, parries this threat.

When something—a melody, say—is expressive, it is *felt* by us as expressive; we do not merely read off its surface the spiritual content it purports to express: it induces in us the very feeling state which we take it to embody. In Sully-Prudhomme's own words, "the melody communicates its character to the sensibility of the listener" (EB, 94). This capacity which we have to take on affective states which properly belong to others—other people in the case of objective expression, other things in the case of subjective expression—is what is called sympathy, and is recognized by Sully-Prudhomme to be "the foundation of all expression" (EB, 95).

In objective expression, several stages in the process can be discerned. First, an individual (other than myself) will be in a certain state of mind which will modify his exterior in such a manner that it reproduces his inner state; secondly, I will perceive this exterior, and my perception is automatically related to my affective side which, thirdly, assumes something of the same state the individual originally expressed. This third step reflects the activity of sympathy. I then may well transmit these sentiments to my own face, as the first individual did—Sully-Prudhomme remarks that the faces of the audience at a theater adjust themselves to accord to the sentiments being expressed—or I may go on to adopt a new attitude of my own. If the emotion originally expressed is one of anger I may ultimately take fright, but not until I have first responded sympathetically.

In subjective expression the initial component of the above account—that an interior state modifies the exterior of an object accordingly—is missing simply because there *is* no interior bearing any recognizable affinity to our own. Nevertheless, we respond *as if* there were one, and thus sympathize with the characteristics of the (expressive) object.

It is easy to see how the symmetry problem is overcome by the introduction of sympathy into the expressive process. Since a *felt recognition* of the congruence between two states is required, expressiveness can only be attributed to the object producing such recognition, and only the individual led to “vibrate sympathetically” with such an object will recognize it to be expressive. Thus our feeling states could never be expressive of a certain kind of tree because the tree would lack the capacity for sympathy. Only for a conscious, affective subject can anything prove to be expressive. Hence, while identity might indeed be a symmetric relationship, expression is strictly one-directional.

Our capacity to sympathize likewise would account for the emotional power which truly expressive objects possess. When we proclaim a work of art, for example, to be expressive, we are not simply making a comment about the content it seems to be conveying; we are also confessing that it *moved* us. Would it make any sense at all to say “That’s a highly expressive work, all right, but it leaves me flat”? If it leaves me flat, I will deny that it has any claim to being expressive, and will judge it instead to be pretentious, affected, or the like. By appealing to our capacity to sympathize,

thus, Sully-Prudhomme is attempting to do justice to our affective responses to people, works of art, beautiful things, or even ugly things—a response which is too readily observable to ignore.

4.4 *Art and Beauty*

To this point in our examination of Sully-Prudhomme's aesthetics the word "beauty" is prominent by its absence. Indeed, it plays a subsidiary role in his theory when compared to the central position it occupies in the thinking of the other philosophers we have considered. For one thing, Sully-Prudhomme offers no theory of natural (i.e., non-human) beauty. One could understandably take his remarks on human and artistic beauty and find some way to make them apply to nature; this might even be facilitated by his silence on the matter of the Author of Nature, but Sully-Prudhomme himself does not do so.

Furthermore, in the domain of human beauty and in art, Sully-Prudhomme shows no inclination to treat moral beauty as in any way central or fundamental. He discerns, where humans are concerned, different types of beauty—genetic beauty, for example, being that which, apparently for purposes of reproduction and the perfecting of our species, we find beautiful in members of the opposite sex; and plastic beauty, being that beauty which a sculptor or painter can disclose, containing not just sexuality, but "all the powers of human life, the moral life . . . , the physical life . . . , the expression of the unity of life" (EB, 203). In fact, when speaking of what a human face can express he enumerates "an expression of genetic beauty or ugliness, an expression of plastic beauty or ugliness, an expression of moral *potentiality*" (EB, 207),²⁶ thus refraining from making any direct attribution of beauty to our moral nature. However, while such intimations do occur more than once in *L'Expression*, there are nevertheless references made on occasion to moral beauty, so he is not systematic in his denial. Still, he is consistent in offering morality a diminished role in his aesthetic theory.

Concerning art, Sully-Prudhomme finds any creation worthy of that name to be expressive: "all art is expressive . . . ; every artist is thus moved, through sympathy, to endow his work with expres-

²⁶ Emphasis mine.

sion" (EB, 230). Within this domain, though, he finds room to apply something akin to the distinction we remarked earlier between subjective and objective expression. It cannot be precisely the same distinction, for in the larger context of expression in general, it will be remembered, there are times when it is legitimate, he contended, for us to infer that a consciousness similar to our own was being expressed (objective expression), and other times when such a consciousness is merely anthropomorphically attributed to the expressive object (subjective expression). No work of art, properly speaking, however, has a consciousness of its own; yet differences in the relation in which the artist stands to his work and his medium do, Sully-Prudhomme believes, justify some distinction. Consequently, when a work expresses feelings proper to the artist himself, it is termed subjective; when the feelings expressed by the work are not the artist's own (however much he must be in sympathy with them to produce the work), it is objective.

Painting and sculpture, from this perspective, are deemed to be the most inherently objective of the arts, for their representational nature most easily imposes certain objective necessities upon the artist; music and architecture, accordingly, are the most subjective, as the interior of the artist can here make its way most directly into the medium (EB, 271). And music is more subjective the further it is distanced from any libretto or text which would narrow the expressive liberty of the composer and thus "objectify" it. Even painting and sculpture, however, have their subjective components, these existing in the general harmony of colors and shapes, in the case of painting, and the overall harmoniousness of form in the case of sculpture. Such elements have an integrity of their own apart from any representational content, and therefore are capable of reflecting the individual subjectivity of the artist apart from what the work might objectively express. In fact, Sully-Prudhomme believes, if a work is not successful on this initial subjective level, it has little hope of being favorably judged, regardless of how elevated or dignified its objective content might purport to be.

This individual subjectivity of the artist—the *temperament* of the artist—holds a position of great importance in Sully-Prudhomme's aesthetics; indeed he remarks at one point that "this alteration of the object by the temperament which reflects it constitutes *all the interest*

of the work of art" (EB, 231).²⁷ Without it, a painting or a description would constitute nothing but a duplication of something already in existence—a needless *doppelgänger* to reality.

Actually, artistic individuality, objective content, and beauty become, with Sully-Prudhomme, three separate categories which often conflict with one another in artistic creation: "a simple clay pot by Chardin, for example, is infinitely more agreeable to look at than a historical painting done in vulgar colors" (EB, 232), thus indicating the preeminence of individuality over content. Then a bit later on he speculates "Was it not . . . to remove from the work of art everything which might distract the spectator from perceiving the purely plastic beauty which is proper to it that the Greek sculptors banished from the faces of their statues all determinate expression of any impassioned state of soul" (EB, 233), thus viewing beauty and expression as standing in opposition to one another.

It is in his treatment of artistic beauty that Sully-Prudhomme allows some notion of the ideal to creep in. He defines such beauty as "the expression of ideal well-being (*bonheur*) by means of an eminently agreeable sensible perception" (EB, 255), and yet for various reasons he attributes little in the way of practical utility to this definition. For one thing, Sully-Prudhomme's notion of the ideal is less objective than, say, Lévêque's purports to be. He attributes no extramental reality to his ideal, locating any such ideal instead in an individual mind, where it is said to exist as something of a dream (*l'idéal rêvé*) (EB, 295), or an aspiration. Clearly, dreams are individualized "entities," which obviously invites the kind of pluralism which Lévêque and the others sought to avoid, but which seems not to frighten Sully-Prudhomme all that much. His characterization of this ideal as "unrealizable," something "of which the soul can only dream, to which it can only aspire" (EB, 255), sounds reminiscent of Cousin, but there is no hint in Sully-Prudhomme of any such act as "immediate abstraction" through which Cousin opined that we could in some respect gain consciousness of the ideal, and no suggestion whatsoever that it constitutes an attribute of the absolute.

This pluralism which Sully-Prudhomme's ideal seems to invite becomes all the more rampant when differences in artistic media and the diversity among artistic genres are factored in. Thus within

²⁷ Emphasis mine.

painting alone “the beauty of a still life, that of a landscape, a nude, a symbolic or religious painting, a historic painting, a portrait are not the same” (EB, 369-70), and when we combine this enumeration with his contention that “any attempt to classify genres in some order of importance would be overbold” (EB, 372-73), we are left with a notion of artistic beauty far more diluted than any of his predecessors would have accepted. And beauty itself, let us not forget, has already been removed by Sully-Prudhomme from its traditional location at the apex of aesthetic analysis.

4.5 *Final Reflections*

Let us conclude this study with some reflections on the contributions, principally of a positive nature, which Sully-Prudhomme brought to expressionism.

1. In resolving to remain mute on whether there is a God, or some spiritual force, behind or within nature, making itself known through nature, or that there is a soul within each man which exteriorizes itself in a similar fashion, and in reinterpreting the expressionist aesthetic to cohere with this approach, Sully-Prudhomme made it possible to subscribe to the doctrine without at the same time buying into a theistic or spiritualistic metaphysics. Naturally, this increased its subscription rate considerably.

2. Replacing the traditional theory of natural signs with a notion of expression based on the identity of character existing between the expressive object and the expressed state likewise updated the doctrine considerably. Once one gets past the examples of natural signs most commonly cited—cries of pain, outbursts of laughter or rage—this “natural language” quickly gives way to ethnic differentiations, even individual differentiations (clearly some people from the same culture show their anger quite plainly; others store it; others bury it beneath laughter, etc.).

Furthermore, the kind of expression which humans are disposed to make through natural signs—construing that phrase either as the greater part of the tradition did, as truly inherent to our (God-given) nature, or as Sully-Prudhomme did, as developed across the ages for purposes of survival—is very different from the expression which takes place in art. Later thinkers, such as Dewey and Collingwood, refer to this natural form of expression as *betraying* or *venting* emotions, which is not at all the same as expressing them as an artist

does. Sully-Prudhomme's approach, stressing the isomorphic relationship between the vehicle and the content of expression, lays the foundation for the type of expression which these later theories develop.

Where nature is concerned, even Jouffroy had acknowledged the discrepancy between the expressive appearance of a weeping willow and its supposed interior. Insight into the workings of nature—the formation of crystals, the attraction and repulsion of various substances—was accumulating rapidly. The Darwinian model by which the creatures of the world were seen to have come by the features they possess had to be taken seriously. Sully-Prudhomme's account of expression is deferent to these scientific developments. Of course one was not obliged to abandon his theistic beliefs—but neither was one obliged to retain them simply to maintain adherence to an expressionist aesthetic. Indeed, in this latter half of the present century we have seen a rich variety of expression theories of art, from individuals as diverse in their ultimate philosophical commitments as Suzanne Langer, O. K. Bouwsma and Peter Kivy, to name but a few.²⁸

3. The connection between beauty and morality, very close in the thinking of Reid and Cousin, had loosened somewhat with Jouffroy; by the time Lévêque had finished with it, it stood in need either of considerable, costly repair or outright replacement. The problem was that Lévêque didn't quite want to abandon it, so he appealed to the notion of suitability—that the regular form and features displayed by a "classically" configured person were more suitable to the expression of moral content. As should be evident from our earlier discussion, this is simply not the case.

Gaborit perceived that Lévêque's treatment was inadequate, and opted to reaffirm the older version of the theory by arguing that merely physical beauty should more properly be placed in the category which he designated the *gracieux*, thus leaving the field clear for moral beauty alone to bear the label "beautiful" in its truest sense. Gaborit, however, did so in an effort to maintain the spiritual-

²⁸ See Susanne K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key* (New York: Penguin Books, Inc., 1948); O.K. Bowsma, "The Expression Theory of Art," *Philosophical Analysis*, Max Black, ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1950); and Peter Kivy, *The Corded Shell* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

ist metaphysics with which moral beauty had so long been allied. Alongside this effort stood the presumption that beauty was the ultimate aesthetic concept—if any adjustments were to be made, they should apply to a subsidiary notion such as the *gracieux*.

Sully-Prudhomme was not only willing to sacrifice the spiritualist metaphysics; he also brought beauty down among a number of other aesthetic concepts of equal moment—expression itself and artistic individuality, to name the principal competitors. The result, though it sounds a bit pompous to put it this way, was something of a Copernican revolution in aesthetics. (After all, would anyone have thought to make such a claim of Kant's philosophy, had he not made it himself?)

A plurality of aesthetic concepts had long been acknowledged—the pretty, the agreeable, and beauty's closest competitor, the sublime—but generally, any explanation of their significance would be coupled with an account of how they failed to measure up to true beauty. By demoting beauty from its central status, Sully-Prudhomme made it perfectly allowable to speak of moral beauty as just one type of beauty—which in its turn is just one type of aesthetic attribute. In other words, when moral beauty was held to constitute beauty proper, a great body of conflicting intuitions spoke loudly to the contrary. If, however, moral beauty just happens to be one form of beauty among innumerable others, these same intuitions do not mortally injure the expression theory—indeed they are to be expected. It is easy to see how this tendency, timorously initiated by Sully-Prudhomme, has mushroomed, to the extent that in recent aesthetic theorizing not only is beauty not the central aesthetic concept—it is not even an important one.

This same combination of factors—the de-spiritualization of the aesthetic realm in general and the diminution of importance of moral beauty—also defuses the troubling issue of natural ugliness. This was a problem for those who believed that the goodness of God shone through his creation; its resolution seemed to require nothing less than an aesthetic theodicy of the sort provided, as we have seen, by Dumont. For Sully-Prudhomme, though, all aesthetic predicates applied to nature are the result of our natural tendency toward anthropomorphism. He observes, simply and succinctly, “to know whether monkeys are really ugly, we would have to consult a monkey, for the beauty which we unconsciously seek in the mon-

key's form and assuredly fail to find is a human beauty" (EB, 104-05).

4. Finally, Sully-Prudhomme's distinction between subjective and objective approaches to artistic creation contributed greatly to the longevity of expressionism in aesthetics. While the theory enjoyed a long, intimate relationship with romanticism, it nevertheless outlived this particular artistic movement—there are still expression theories of art, after all, yet we could hardly be said to be living in a romantic age.

The idea that the work of art welled up within the artist and expressed his innermost subjectivity, and that to appreciate a work we the audience somehow had to tap into this outpouring directly and relive the artist's experience is a very romantic notion of artistic creation and appreciation. The mere acknowledgement that there is an objective approach to expression, and that we can sympathize with a work without becoming one with the artist, made it possible for expression to retain its explanatory viability even apart from the romantic environment where it thrived for so long.

Despite these very forward looking developments, it should nevertheless be clear that Sully-Prudhomme still oriented his thinking toward the Scottish aesthetic tradition. Art, on his account, maintains close ties with expression (even if it possesses virtues which are not explicitly expressive in nature); expressiveness remains, in some sense, a relationship between the interior and the exterior of an object; and sympathy—Jouffroy's special contribution—continues to play an indispensable role in his explanation of the expressive process. Viewing Sully-Prudhomme's own contributions to the tradition retrospectively, as we are now in a position to do, it appears that he did what any good heir does—inherit the family fortune and pass it on to the next generation somewhat the richer. As a result, expressionism, which was beginning to show its age, shook off its cobwebs and stood ready to confront the twentieth century with renewed vigor.

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